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LAURA.

BY LOUISE SCHEFLERN.

Laura's voice is low and gentle,
Like the song-bird's free,
Every word and every accent
Music unto me.
Laura's eyes are like the color
Of the heavens above,
Azure depths so clear and truthful—
Laura is my love.

You may sing of radiant beauties,
Dark eyes' witchery,
But I ne'er have seen a maiden
Half so fair to me
As my dainty blue-eyed darling,
Fluttering like a dove
Round my arm-chair, books and table—
Laura is my love.

DAVY CROCKETT ON THE TRACK;

OR,

The Cave of the Counterfeiters.

BY FRANK CARROLL,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF GLENDALE," "JOHN PASSMORE'S PLOT," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHOOTING MATCH.

Near a village in Western Tennessee, some twenty miles distant from the Mississippi river, a large assemblage of men were gathered. Nor was the scene ungraced by representatives of the fair sex, many of whom softened by their presence the rather rude crowd of backwood heroes who formed the assemblage.

It was about the first of September, and the warmth of the summer air was already tempered by a cool breath from the north, premonitory of the approach of the season of frost.

THE SHOOTING MATCH.

A LOUD SHOUT FROM THE JUDGES ANNOUNCED THE RESULT. "IN THE CENTRE, TRUE AS A DIE. GOOD FOR YOU, ROB GORDON. THAT TAKES THE FIRST CHOICE. AND THERE AIN'T BEEN A BETTER SHOT HERE THIS YEAR."

houses, the most of these being small, rude structures of wood. In their midst stood the inevitable tavern, a frame building rather larger than the others. A blacksmith shop, and a country store, in which everything might be purchased "from a needle to an anchor," dry-goods, groceries, hardware, and etceteras innumerable, comprised the business enterprises of the place.

The inhabitants were mostly small farmers, with a sprinkling of wood-choppers, hunters, and those engaged in other avocations. The country around was a sparsely-settled farming district, in which but contracted clearings broke the continuity of the primeval woodland, which yet occupied the greater portion of the region.

The wild beasts that had disputed possession with the Indians were not yet exterminated by his civilized successor, and the deer which roamed the woods had sturdy companionship in the bears, and dangerous enemies in the wild-cats, wolves and panthers, which yet made the forest their home.

That monarch of the deer tribe, the elk, still roamed in safety through these backwoods, but little disturbed by the rifle of the adventurous hunter. Indeed, but a single evidence of the near approach of civilization marked the forest depths. The bee, that pioneer of the pale-faced invader, on which the Indians look with dread as the sure precursor of the white man, was numerous in these woods, and many of the hollow trees were filled with a nectar gathered from generations of flowers by these industrious honey-seekers.

Most of the assembled people carried their rifles, that necessary companion of the pioneer, and the constant quick reports from the centre of the crowd showed that these weapons were being brought into practical employment.

It was, in fact, a shooting-match, an occasion of frequent recurrence in these settlements, that had brought the assemblage together, collected not only from the villages, but from the farms for miles around, and from isolated huts buried in the depths of the forest.

These men, born almost rifle in hand, and accustomed to a life in which existence often depended on a sure eye and a quick finger at the trigger, were of a different type from what we would call good marksmen here in the east. They would have laughed to scorn our targets, and have disdained to empty their rifles in competition with our crack shots.

To hit a panther in the eye, when crouched in readiness to leap, or to strike the bald eagle with a rifle-ball in his lofty flight overhead, were feats more in their vein; and they were accustomed to boast of their deeds in a hyperbolic strain that was not unjustified by the facts.

At this period of the year, when the beeves which had been fattening on the rich grasses of the alluvial soil, were in prime condition, it was usual to dispose of them in this manner, offering them to be shot for, in matches fixed for stated occasions and localities.

These matches were kept up not only all day, but often all night, candles replacing the lost light of the sun. Everything was shot for, dry-goods, shoes, groceries, &c., the woman at home setting little store by anything bought outright by their good man, and not won by his skill with the rifle. But if the article had cost him ten times its value, he could count on being forgiven if he had won it by a bullet.

Each man brought his own target, a piece of board with a small bit of paper in the centre. On this paper were made three circles, at one-half, three-quarters, and one inch from the centre. Any shot more than an inch from the centre was not counted. The usual shooting distance was sixty yards with a rest, or forty yards offhand, which latter mode was much preferred by these skilled marksmen.

In shooting for cattle, each man put up twenty-five cents for a shot, the price of a fat ox being about twenty dollars. There were six prizes. The best shot got the hide and tallow, which was considered the first choice. The second and third best got the two hind-quarters, the fourth and fifth the two fore-quarters, and the sixth, the lead which had been shot into the tree against which the targets rested.

These few particulars are given in order to render more intelligible the mode of conducting the matches, at one of which the reader has just been introduced.

The fair attendants upon these masculine sports were of a different stamp from their fashionable sisters of the city. Red-cheeked, robust, well-formed girls, free in their movements, hearty in their tones, conventionality had never robbed them of the grace of nature, nor fashion tortured their frames out of all semblance to the line of beauty.

But our present concern is with but one of these daughters of the forest, the fairest and most refined in appearance of them all.

Apart from the main body of the people stood two persons, a young man and the maiden to whom we have alluded, deeply engaged in conversation.

She was young and beautiful, possessing one of those fair complexions which the sun seems unable to embrown. A soft blue eye, which yet did not lack the fire of a resolute will, a rosy hue in her cheeks that rivalled the crimson of her lips, and golden hair that flowed freely over her shoulders, formed a combination that would have been thought beautiful in any locality.

She was attired, like the others, in the plainest material, but it lacked not artistic ornament, while her fine form swayed with queenly grace.

Her companion was a handsome, athletic youth, tall, graceful and muscular, his broad shoulders and sturdy limbs betokening a strength which did not appear evident on a first glance at his form.

They were conversing in low and earnest tones, as if desirous not to be overheard.

But words were not necessary to show the relation between them. There was a warm light in the glance she turned upon him, a rich affection in his responsive glance that would have satisfied any one skilled in affairs of the heart that he gazed upon declared lovers.

"Look around quietly," she said, in low, melodious tones. "The man with the heavy black beard, on the edge of the crowd. Don't let him notice you looking. He has his eyes fixed on us."

"And why have not I as much warrant to fix my eyes on him?"

"Don't, Rob. I am dreadfully afraid of him. I would not have him know for the world that we are talking about him."

"He is a stranger to me. Why do you fear him? Has he dared to annoy you?"

"I do not know who he is. He has called several times at our house, pretending to have business with my father, and has met me more than once in the road."

"He has not insulted you?" asked Rob, fiercely.

"No, no. Only his attentions are annoying. I cannot bear the man. He is very disagreeable to me."

"You are not telling me all, Maggie," said her lover.

"You will not do anything violent?"

"No, I will be as meek as a lamb. What else is there?"

"He went so far as to make me a declaration of love. But you can judge what answer I gave him."

"A short one, I hope?"

"Too short for his tastes. I want you to avoid him, Rob. His eyes were fixed on you just now with a very sinister look."

"He had better avoid me if he knows when he is well off. He has the face of a villain. Let him look out how he crosses my path."

"Are you not going to take your chance in the match?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes. Wish me good luck, Maggie, and I shall be sure to win."

Entering the throng he pressed forward toward the centre of the mass, where a wide space stood vacant between the marksmen and the tree. One by one the riflemen stepped up, discharged their weapons, and gave place to others.

Each, however, fired only at his own target. These were all in possession of the judges, and were put up successively, as the owners called for them.

"Put up my board!" cried Rob, in a cheerful tone as he stepped into the vacant place.

All pressed forward with interest to observe his shots, as he was known to be very skilful.

"What have I got to beat?" he asked of those near by.

"You've got to touch the centre to win the hide," said a bystander. "It has been nipped already."

"Who by?"

"By the fellow there with the black beard. I don't know who he is, but he's a prime shot."

Rob looked round, and saw that the man alluded to was the same one who had just before been pointed out to him.

A feeling of jealous rivalry sprang up in his mind as he saw him. He determined that this stranger should not surpass him in skill, and braced his muscles into iron rigidity as he stepped into position and faced the target that hung on the tree, forty yards distant.

He held the rifle pointing to the ground. With eye firmly fixed on the black spot in the centre of the target he slowly raised the weapon to the level, his eye ranging along the sights. For an instant he stood thus, as if carved out of marble, then the rifle belched forth its flaming message, and the bullet sped across the intervening space.

The judges instantly examined the target, crying out—

"Just touched the centre. It is a tie shot with the best shot scored before."

"You've got to do a little better than that if you want to carry off the prize," said a voice at his elbow, as he was loading for his second shot.

He looked round and saw beside him his black-bearded rival.

A slight frown marked his brow as he answered—

"I will beat your shot, or burst my barrel."

"Do your best then. I have two chances left, and haven't let myself out yet."

Disdaining a reply, Rob raised the rifle to his eye and fired again. But despite himself his nerves had been somewhat shaken by his colloquy with his rival, and the ball struck wide of the centre, just coming within the outer circle. His third shot was little better, cutting the half-inch circle.

A shout rose from the lookers-on as these shots were announced. The promise of his first shot had been so poorly followed up, and they had expected so much better from him, that there was not only disappointment but a shade of derision in their cry. The latter feeling was strongly displayed in a voice near him, which he clearly recognized as that of his would-be rival.

If it was intended to still further excite him, it had the opposite effect. His lip curled with resolution, and a stern light came into his eyes as he again stepped into position.

Now every nerve was steady, every muscle as rigid as steel. His aim was taken with unusual care, his eye ranging for several seconds along the barrel before the trigger was touched.

On the report the judges, who stood on each side of the target, sprang forward. After a momentary examination, they cried out:

"That's the champion shot. A shade to the left, and it would have gone through the bull's eye. That's the bullet will take the hide."

A shout, now of triumph, rose from the mass. The marksman was a favorite with them, and they rejoiced in the success of their own comrade over a stranger.

"I've got two shots yet, my friend," said the voice at his elbow. "The hide ain't yours yet."

"And I'll have one," said Rob, as he walked away. "I will keep it till I see what your brag comes to."

The shooting continued with unabated vigor as our friend left the mass and sought his former companion, who awaited him just outside the throng.

"So you are champion?" she said.

"That is the verdict of the judges," he replied, somewhat proudly. "I have left a bullet there which will try the best of them to match. I did not gain much credit, though, by two of my shots."

"Yes. How was it?"

"It came from your black-faced friend. I got a little angry at something he said, and grew a trifle nervous in consequence."

"Do you know that he accosted me again after you left me."

"No. What did he say to you?"

"He asked for my answer to his suit, with as much effrontery as if I had not already answered him."

"And you repeated your former answer?"

"In much stronger terms. I gave him plainly to understand that I would prefer in the future to have nothing to do with him."

"That is my own Maggie. I hope that will be a settler for him."

"I fear not," she anxiously replied. "He spoke about you; said that I was throwing him aside for you, and that he would be even with you. I dread that man, Rob. He seems to be a desperate character, and may seek to do you an injury."

"Let him try it, and he will find that he has no child to play with. I have not spent weeks in the woods, and put my mark on panthers and wolves, to fear a fellow like that. If he troubles you again, he will have me to settle with."

"You have another chance?" she asked, changing the subject.

"Yes, and he has two. There is a sort of challenge between us. He cannot beat my last shot without touching the bull's eye exactly in the centre; and if he does I will cover his bullet for him."

As they conversed the firing rapidly continued. At this juncture the judges called out:

"There are only three chances left. One to Robert Gordon, and two to Dick Brown. Come, gentlemen, take your places, and finish the ox."

The crowd slightly separated to permit the entrance of the two remaining competitors. The one last named proved to be the man between whom and Robert had sprung up a feeling of rivalry.

"Do your prettiest, my friend," said the latter, somewhat sarcastically, as they came together. "I want to see what you are going to do with my last shot before I put in another bullet."

"I'm going to beat it dead," said the other, with a savage intonation of voice. "I've got a ball in my rifle that will go where you can't put one."

"Brag's a good dog, Mr. Brown. But brag won't take the ox."

"Hang the ox. It ain't the ox I'm shooting for."

"What then?" asked Rob.

"The girl!" replied the other, in a low, fierce voice. "I dare you to shoot with me for the girl. I'm bound to have her—and if you want to come in first best, you'll have to beat me with a bullet."

"The girl!" repeated Rob, angrily. "There is but one way I will shoot for her. I shot a wolf once that ventured too near her in the woods. Be careful how you trouble her, or I may make up my mind to try some more wolf-shooting."

This angry colloquy was broken by one of the judges exclaiming—

"Come, Mr. Brown, your board's up."

"Take care you ain't stirred up a catamount," said Brown, savagely, as he moved toward his position. "You start a hoss if you start me."

This colloquy was carried on in a low voice, out of hearing of the persons surrounding them.

The last speaker took his place and raised his weapon with great deliberation. He was a tall, muscular fellow, and stood firm as a rock as he brought the rifle to his eye, his bronzed, fierce face full of a savage expression that showed his native disposition more truly than his usual demeanor. A moment, and the rifle belched forth its fiery missive, with a quick, loud report.

"A good shot!" cried the judge, as he examined it. "But it won't win. You've got to do better. Only the bull's eye will take the hide."

"Here's for it then," said Brown, who had carefully reloaded his rifle, again stepping into position.

He now raised it with still greater care, and glanced along the sights for a time that seemed an age to the impatience of these quick shooters. The trigger was touched, and the ball again sped to its destination.

The judges rushed quickly to examine it. They seemed to be some time in forming their opinion, measuring, and conversing eagerly in low tones.

"It's mighty near a tie," one of them at length announced. "It's not easy to decide, but we think it has a shade the best."

A shout from the crowd greeted this decision.

"Come, Rob, you've got the last shot. Go in for it. Beat your best," came from various friendly voices in the throng.

With a smile Rob stepped into his place, and calmly awaited the placing of his board in position. A new piece of paper had been pasted over the centre, concealing the hole pierced by his former shot.

With intense interest the people pressed up, anxious to see their friend triumph over this comparative stranger.

Every trace of nervousness seemed to have left the marksman's body. He stood with easy grace in his position, raising his rifle with a rapidity that showed a full assurance in his mind.

The aim seemed careless to the lookers-on, so quickly did he fire after raising the weapon to his eye.

A loud shout from the judges announced the result.

"In the centre, true as a die. Good for you, Rob Gordon. That takes the first choice. And there ain't been a better shot here this year."

CHAPTER II.

THE FOOT OF THE ASSASSIN.

The shooting match was kept up with unabated vigor until darkness fell upon the scene. Even then some enthusiastic souls, undeterred by the gloom, lit up their targets with tallow candles, and continued to shoot, articles of the most diversified character serving as the prizes in this frontier species of gambling.

Meanwhile the younger portion of the party had a more attractive game on hand. In a large room attached to the hotel the young men and maidens were assembled, eager to take part in a dance which had been arranged to finish the festivities of the day.

It was a different affair from our civilized idea of a ball. The music provided consisted of a violin in the hands of an odd-looking old negro, who was perched upon the head of a barrel to elevate him somewhat above the crowd. He wore a coat long enough to clothe not only himself, but half the barrel, and patched till it had all the colors of the rainbow. His thick, protruding lips, staring eyes, hair swelling in kinky knots through his well-ventilated hat, and densely black hue, made in all a most grotesque figure.

His dancing tunes were all in very rapid time, and bore so strong a similarity, that only the various titles he gave them hindered them all being mistaken for the same air. He accompanied them with occasional snatches of negro minstrelsy, in which the audience frequently joined, adding greatly to the grotesqueness of the scene.

And the dancing was such as only vigorous muscles, plentiful vitality, and a keen zest for the sport could long have sustained.

"None of your wheelin' and wheedlin ways of getting over the floor, sich as I've seed in the cities. That's not the sort for the Tennessee gals and fellers. We mean work, that's us. None of your flirtin' and fantastics; but a regular snifter, cover the buckle, chicken-flutter, breakdown."

With this explanation to a stranger, who was present as a looker-on, the excited backwoodsman leaped again into the midst of the melee, making the house tremble with his exertions.

Rob Gordon and his sweetheart, Maggie Campbell, were among the most skilful of the dancers present. They avoided, it is true, the more violent of the terpsichorean efforts. But they were both born and bred on the frontier, were young, active, and enthusiastic, and full of that physical vigor which finds enjoyment in the most active exercise.

Dick Brown had taken no further part in the shooting-match after his defeat by his rival.

Though known to but few present, and rather mistrusted by all, he made his way into the dancing-room, and stood for some time as a spectator of the scene, his eyes fixed upon the gracefully-moving forms of Rob and Maggie, with a fierce glare that betokened ill to one or both of them.

But he was not left long without a partner. The frank manner and sociable disposition of the frontiersmen soon brought him acquaintances, and ere long he was on the floor, dancing away for dear life in the midst of the melee.

But the buxom country lass who kept step with him was not the partner he coveted. Through all the evolutions of the dance he kept his eyes fixed on the pair in whom he was so deeply interested.

He took an opportunity, during a momentary absence of his rival from Maggie's side, to approach her, and request the pleasure of her hand in the dance.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Brown," she answered, somewhat haughtily, "but I am engaged."

"Well, then, the next dance?"

"No dance with you, sir. I have already engaged myself for all the sets that I intend to take part in."

She turned abruptly away, and advanced to meet her lover, who was approaching from the other end of the room.

Neither of them noticed the sinister look which was bent upon them by the discarded suitor, as she proceeded to tell Rob of her offer of a partner.

"Dick Brown again!" he said in a vexed tone. "That gentleman has got to shift his quarters, and keep out of your track, or—"

"Or what, Rob? But don't be making threats. I do not think that he will disturb me again."

"If he does I'll settle him, that's all; and there's no brag in that. I find that I have to leave here for an hour or two, Maggie. I've just heard of some business that must be attended to right away. But I'll be back by twelve o'clock, or along there, and you have plenty of friends here to take care of you till I return."

"Don't doubt but that I will take care of myself. But must you go?"

"Yes. It's some business that can't be put off. I'll be back, though. You can look for me, and wait till I come."

"I shall do that," she replied. "There will be very few leave here before daylight, and if I wait till the sun is up it won't be the first time."

"I'll be back long before that," he repeated. "I'll leave my rifle here, as I will not need it. Don't wait for me, Maggie, if you feel like dancing. And now, good-bye, till I get back." There was a peculiar sound, like a light explosion, drowned

by the noise from all but one pair of ears in the room, and the next moment Rob was out into the night.

But he went not alone. Maggie, after his departure, looked round with a feeling of dread for the man who had been persecuting her. Not that she had, just now, any real fear of him, but that his persistence had grown annoying to her.

With considerable relief she found that he was not in sight. He had left the room about the same time as Rob.

Had she known his object in this, had she dreamed of the imminent peril of her lover, her state of mind would have been very different from what it was at present, and she would have roused the whole assemblage in pursuit, rather than have entered again into the frivolity of the dance.

Rob went rapidly down the country road leading to his destination, with a light, swinging step, and a cheery heart, that made little account of distance.

The moon had risen and threw its pale lustre upon the road, tempering the darkness and rendering his pathway plainly visible.

As he went on, however, the road ran through a dense woodland, which permitted but a stray beam of light to touch the surface, and made his way as dark as through some deep cavern.

But he knew the road thoroughly, and went rapidly on, anxious to finish his business and return to the festivities which he had reluctantly quitted.

Several times during his progress he heard a faint sound, as of the footsteps of a man following him.

Once or twice he stopped and looked keenly back, but the gloom was impenetrable, and no sound now came to his ears, other than the usual faint whispers of the night.

Emerging from the wood a long stretch of road lay before him, illuminated by the moon, which was now attaining some height in the sky.

Along this he proceeded with increased speed, looking back occasionally, for he could not drive from his mind the thought that he had been pursued, though why or by whom he could not conjecture. His mind was slightly disturbed by what he had heard concerning his would-be rival during the day.

Yet he had left this man at the dance. It could not be he. In all probability, he told himself, it was only imagination, yet he could not help wishing that he had brought along his rifle, that trusty companion from which he seldom allowed himself to be parted.

He was right in his conjecture. He was followed. A shadowy figure trailed after him through the woods, boldly keeping the centre of the road, and pursued him through the open country, clinging to the road-side, where the bushes threw a shadow into the path of the moonlight.

This silent pursuit continued without further suspicion by its object, until the latter entered a village about three miles distant from the one he had left. It was here his present business conducted him. He entered a house in this village, in which he remained about an hour. On emerging he took the road back to the point he had started from.

With a light step and a happy heart Rob Gordon trod over the miles that lay between him and his sweetheart. No thought of danger now entered his mind. The moon lit up the road to almost the lustre of day, and he was enabled to step out with a freedom that made little account of the miles of distance.

gloom replaced the light of the open road, the moon's rays being unable to make their way through the densely clustering leaves.

He was here obliged to walk more slowly, and something, perhaps only the gloom, perhaps a sound such as he had heard before, revived the suspicion of pursuit in his mind.

He went warily along, his eyes striving to pierce the darkness on either side, and to trace the road behind and before, where a faintly glimmering light rendered objects indistinctly visible.

But this quest was in vain. There was nothing visible of a suspicious character, nothing audible like the sound that he fancied he had heard.

At length, in the distance ahead, a broad gleam of light announced the end of the wood, and the full dominion of the lunar orb again.

With a deep breath of relief he hastened forward, the unusual feeling of apprehension which had possessed him vanishing in the presence of this silvery lustre.

Yet we are often in the deepest danger when most assured of safety. As he reached the very edge of the forest, where a few steps more would have brought him into the open illuminated road, a dark figure rose silently in the screen of bushes by the road-side.

A slender tube, on which the light faintly glimmered, parted the bushes, and in an instant from its mouth shot a flash of light, accompanied by a quick, sharp report. The unsuspecting traveller reeled for a moment, then fell prostrate. The assassin darted back into the wood; and in a minute the silence, which had been broken by this dark deed, resumed its sway over the scene, and over the motionless figure that lay stretched out in the road.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER THE FUGITIVE.

We must revert to the business of such great importance that it took Rob Gordon from the side of his lady-love, on a festive occasion so highly prized by the frontier settlers as a dancing party.

The cause of his sudden movement had been a missive delivered into his hand by a youthful messenger. We will proceed to indicate the nature of the information which had so strongly influenced him.

In order to do so we must go back some distance in time, as well as seek a locality remote from the scene to which we have introduced the reader.

Rob Gordon had a brother of a more roving disposition than himself. This brother, Edward by name, had been like himself, reared in the backwoods, and was an expert woodsman. But he was too strongly inclined to see the world to spend his life as Rob had done in the neighborhood of his birthplace.

It was well known that he had been rather wild in his youth, and had made some acquaintances not very creditable to him. Among these was a certain John Henderson, whose reputation was by no means of the whitest. In fact, both Gordon and his associate had suddenly departed for parts unknown, after some discreditable exploit, the nature of which had been kept secret from all but the parties concerned.

Edward Gordon was not heard of for several years after this period, his family fearing that the wild promise of his youth had borne its native fruit, and that his corrupt associations had led him into lawless practices, and might, for all they knew, have reached their fitting terminus, in the penitentiary.

They were highly gratified then to hear from him, from Louisville, Kentucky, as connected with the Leather Bank of that city, in the capacity of runner. A responsible position like this could not have been obtained without good reference, and it seemed evident that the rover must have acquired some reputation for honesty, ere he could have been so trusted.

For a year or two he filled the position, proving careful and strictly reliable, and no whisper of his old misdoings rose in the city to his discredit.

At the end of that time, however, an event occurred which brought his connection with the bank to an unfortunate termination. He was attacked in the street by a party of three men, knocked down, seriously injured, and robbed of a bag containing five thousand dollars in gold coin.

As to the features of this robbery, there were only the hurts he had received in corroboration of his story. No one had seen the attack, it having occurred in an unfrequented street.

As in all such cases, a certain amount of suspicion attached to the runner himself. It appears so easy to arrange for a pretended attack of this character, to place one's-self in a certain position at a certain hour suitable to the designs of his confederates, while the temptations are so strong, that the feeling of distrust of the bank officer is natural.

Yet there were certain features in this case which did not agree with the theory of an unfaithful officer. In the first place, he was really hurt. There was no sham in the blows he had received. In the second, the amount of money in his possession was much smaller than he often carried.

Detectives were set at work, but they failed to gain any clue to the robbers. They learned, however, some facts of which the bank was not aware. These were the facts we have given as to the discreditable life which Gordon had formerly led.

They learned, moreover, that he had been seen, only a few days before, in conversation with a person of notoriously bad character, one Henderson. The police at once looked for this man, but he was not forthcoming, his old haunts knew him no more.

There was something here of the nature of a clue. Gordon was questioned concerning his association with this man. He displayed some confusion, but stated that he had been accosted by Henderson in the street, and, much against his will, had been detained for some time in conversation. He acknowledged his former acquaintance with the man, saying that they had come from the same locality, but that he had had no knowledge of him since leaving home.

This story was not believed by the questioners. Further inquiry developed reason to believe that Henderson had been a party to the robbery, and in consequence the suspicion against Gordon strengthened sufficiently to induce them to arrest him.

The officers of the bank were strict, severe men. They had no notion of losing such an amount of money if it could be avoided, or of allowing their apparently unfaithful officer to make off with his share of the proceeds.

His lodgings were searched, but no trace of any concealed money could be found. There was no suspicious amount of money on his person. The only circumstances bearing against him, in fact, were his former life and his late conversation with a man whom there was good reason to suppose had a hand in the robbery. Gordon unwisely added to the case against him by admitting [illegible] and that Henderson was one of the men [illegible] and attacked him.

The fact that there had been some disgraceful secret connected with his flight from home, the deep mystery in which his life for a year or two after was involved, and the circumstance of his having been seen familiarly conversing with one of the robbers but a few days before the occurrence, seemed to the police and the bank officers sufficient reason for detaining him in prison on the charge of being a party to the robbery.

Meanwhile vigorous search for evidence was instituted, and the police of other places were given the description of Henderson, with instructions that this man was badly wanted in Louisville, and that a reward would be paid for his arrest.

But he was not forthcoming, and as no new points could be gained against the prisoner, he was held in durance for several months, awaiting a hearing that seemed likely never to come up. His prosecutors were powerful, he had no influential friends, and his undoubted right to a hearing was set aside by the strong hand of power.

Meanwhile he was chafing in his cell against this unjust confinement. He had strong suspicions as to who were the parties engaged in the affair, and knew far more concerning their probable movements than did the police.

He was wise enough, however, to keep this knowledge to himself, being aware that it would tell against him in a trial. But he was anxious to act as his own officer, and to pursue the men who had robbed him until he had delivered them into the hands of justice.

His long confinement made him bitterly resentful against them, and he vowed that nothing should turn him aside from his purpose, that he would follow them from end to end of the land before he would let them escape him. There was some personal feeling against Henderson added to the strength of this resolution.

Meanwhile his prosecutors began to despair of gaining any evidence sufficient to criminate him, or of any chance of laying hands on the real criminals, and recovering their lost money. It was seriously debated to abandon the prosecution against Gordon, and set him free, though with the ban of suspicion still attached to him.

Before this resolution could be put into practice, however, the prisoner himself cut the gordian knot of the difficulty. One morning the prison keepers, on going to his cell, found it empty. He had escaped during the night.

The bars of his window had been cut, and he had lowered himself to the ground by the aid of a rope extemporized from his bed-clothing. The prison in which he had been confined was not remarkable for strength, and once outside his window the open street lay before him.

And now was revealed one of the strange features of human nature. The prisoner, whom they had determined to get rid of, no sooner saved them the trouble by making jail delivery on his own hook, than they began badly to want him. His flight seemed to them so suspicious a circumstance, that they probably hoped by finding the fugitive to find the money, or else some clue to its whereabouts.

In consequence the police force of the city were instructed to look up, and report at the prison with Edward Gordon, and with any company they might find him in.

Their search was in vain. The fugitive was not to be found. He had apparently left the city. There was a scrap of paper discovered in his cell, on which he had written that his escape was made with the object of pursuing the thieves. He would return when he had recovered the money lost by the bank, and it was useless to seek for him until he was ready thus to return.

The bank officers failed to take this view of the case, and concluded to extend their search beyond the limits of the city. They took it for granted that this letter was but a subterfuge, intended to retard pursuit, and give the fugitive an opportunity to place himself, and his share of the proceeds of the robbery, beyond their reach.

Its effect, therefore, was simply to institute a more determined search, a reward being offered for the recovery of any portion of the lost money.

As the circumstances attending the imprisonment of his brother were known to Robert Gordon, his surprise may be imagined, and his haste and secrecy understood, when we give the contents of the note that had so suddenly called him from the dancing party.

It ran as follows:

"DEAR ROB—Come to Tim Hall's as soon as you get this, and be as quiet as a mouse about it. I have broke the stone jug and am wanted bad in Louisville. I am tracking the thieves, and the hounds are tracking me. Don't fail me, Rob, I want to set myself right with you, and maybe you can help me. I am innocent of the charge against me, and will prove it yet.

"Don't lose a minute, I am fearful to stay here long, as I've a notion the bloodhounds of the law are trailing me down this way. Burn this and keep a still tongue.

"YOUR BROTHER NED."

We will not detail the conversation that took place between the brothers, so long parted, and meeting under such trying circumstances.

Edward was earnest and apparently truthful in declaring his honesty, and describing the real state of the case to his brother. He had no direct proof against any person as concerned in the robbery, but was strongly inclined to suspect Jack Henderson as one of the gang.

He was rather well posted concerning the haunts and associates of this individual, and had occupied himself, since his escape from prison, in trying to get upon his trail.

He had good reason to believe that the gang had headed down this way, and thought that he had traced them to within twenty miles of the village in which he then was.

He hoped to be able himself to run them to the earth, but would need aid if it became necessary to make a show of force with them.

Could he depend on Rob's assistance in case he should need it?

"Just let me know when and where you want me, Ned, and I will be on the spot, with all the men you want, in about the quickest time going," was Rob's reply.

"Thank you, brother," replied the fugitive. "I have made myself a bad record by my foolish course of life, and you might well distrust me. But I have only been wild, never criminal, though I have foolishly kept faith with a bad crew, and have been repaid by their victimizing me. I don't ask you to believe all this now, but I intend to prove it."

"I trust you now, Ned, and will do my best to help you."

Little did he or his brother deem the fate that awaited him on his return, or on what a murderous deed the midnight moon would gaze. He left the house light-hearted with trust in his brother's innocence, and, [illegible] full of hope [illegible] the future, into the lair of the assassin.

The son of the host—who has been introduced to us as Tim Hall—at this moment entered the house, with a movement significant of caution.

"What is up?" asked the father. "Anything odd stirring?"

"There's a couple of coves out thar in the road as I don't quite like the looks of," replied the boy, who had been out on a reconnoissance. "There's a bit of a pryin' way with them, and they aren't the kind of chaps we sees much about here. I think they're arter somebody not far away."

"What do you think about this, Ned?" asked the father, anxiously.

"It is what I expected," replied the guest. "I thought I was tracked, and only intended to stay in these quarters long enough to have a talk with Rob. Where were they, my bright boy?"

"Just a piece down the road, when I first seed them. They come up and watched the house kind of close. But when Mr. Rob went out they stepped a bit on."

"I'll take a look at them, Tim. If they are the men I suspect, it's good-bye. If not, I'll be back."

"Isn't it risky, Ned?"

"Not at all. They won't see me. But I may have to strike for the bush. If I do—"

"Hush!" said the host, in a low, alarmed voice. "Do you hear that? By the powers, they're at the doors now, back and front."

"They won't take me," said Gordon, resolutely, putting his hand to his breast, as if to draw a weapon.

"None of that, Ned. They're law-officers, mind you. That won't never answer."

"What then? It's too late to hide."

"Quick! Squeeze yourself under this table in the corner. I'll cover you."

It was a low, square table, just large enough to cover him, when in a stooping posture, but leaving him visible.

Tim seized a large, winter-cloak, that depended from a nail in the corner, and threw it over the table, in such a way that its ample folds hung to the floor, concealing the fugitive from any one standing in front.

Seating himself nonchalantly on a chair just in front of this place of concealment, the host called to him a large dog that lay coiled in a corner of the room. He was affectionately stroking the head of this animal when the door opened, and the two men alluded to entered the room.

"I'm kinder happy to see you, friends," said Tim, coolly. "It's a sort of notion of mine, though, that you didn't knock, and it's a late hour for a visit."

The strangers explained to him their purpose, with some display of disappointment on finding that the fugitive, whom they had fully expected to find, was not apparently present.

"So you're perlice from Louisville," said Tim. "Well, I'm not the man to put myself agin the law. My house aren't a big one, gentlemen, but you're welcome to search it, if it'll be any satisfaction. Oh, he won't bite," he continued, as one of them came near the dog, which gave a low savage growl, incited by a secret pinch from its master. "He's only a pup, and wants to play with you."

But the officers did not appreciate his playful spirit. They kept aloof from the pup, and left the room, proceeding to examine the house, under the leadership of Tim's son, whom his father had told to accompany them.

"The coast's clear," whispered the host, rising excitedly from his chair. "No! no! don't stir. There's another hand at my front door-latch. Hang me if they ain't making freer than I likes. Lay there, Bounce. Keep your eye skinned, and your teeth sharp."

This was addressed to the dog, who coiled himself up in a heap at the end of the table, hiding the fugitive from a point of view not covered by the cloak.

The man who now entered the room was so marked in appearance that he would have attracted attention wherever seen.

Both in dress and bearing he was the very ideal of the frontiersman. He was of a stalwart frame, fully six feet high, with broad shoulders and muscular limbs. His face, though burnt brown from an out-door life, was handsome, and very frank in expression. Keen, gray eyes, kindly but resolute lips, nose and chin rather prominent, and short brown hair and whiskers, were the features of a highly intelligent face.

He was dressed in plain homespun, with a black fur cap drawn closely down upon his head. By his side hung a coon-skin bag, from which were suspended a large knife in a sheath, and a charger made from an alligator's tooth.

His right hand clasped a long-barrelled rifle, a common, flint-locked weapon, which looked as if it had seen severe service. The breech was mended in several places, by waxed thread wrapped closely around it. There were also several holes bored in it, for some purpose not apparent. In these were inserted bright-colored feathers, giving a fantastic appearance to the well-used rifle.

Simply nodding to the host, who seemed to recognize him, this person coolly seated himself on the table, beneath which lay the fugitive.

Hall was about to speak, when the officers re-entered the room. They looked curiously at the new-comer, who returned their glances with interest.

"I could have sworn our man was here," said one of them.

"It ain't took you long to git over my hotel," said Tim, "though there mought be bigger ones. If you think I've got your game on hand you're welcome to find him."

"We're bound to take him," said the second officer. "He has given us the slip so far, but his rope is not long."

"I don't jist happen to know what's in the wind," said the new-comer, in a voice of deep but mellow tone, "but there's a neat bit of a motto which I always stick to when I've got business on hand. Maybe it mought help you in your little difficulty."

"What is that?" asked one of the men, somewhat angrily, as he recoiled from a low, ominous growl of the dog, too nigh whom he had ventured.

"Be always sure you're right, then go ahead. It may'nt look like much of a hold in a gale of wind, but it's pulled me through a trifle of tight places in my time."

"And who the thunder are you, anyhow?" asked the man, furious at the thought that he was being laughed at.

"I've got several handles to my name," was the cool reply. "Army men, and folks as ain't very familiar, call me Colonel. When I was in Congress I was generally Mister. But folks about here give me the name I like best, 'cause it's kinder short and handy; and that's plain Davy Crockett, at your sarvice."

As he spoke he rose from his seat and stretched himself to his full height. As he did so the cloak on which he had been seated fell to the floor, leaving in full view, under the table, the coiled-up form of the fugitive.

(To be continued in our next.)

CLAUDIA'S TRIUMPH.

BY CLEMENTINE MONTAGU,

AUTHOR OF "THE COST OF CONQUEST," ETC.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TRAPPED.

My tables, meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.
—*Shakspeare.*

They stood in breathless silence for a moment listening, and then Alma, in an agony of terror, exclaimed—

"Oh, Frank, we are discovered—we are lost!"

"Not yet," he said, though he trembled more for her than for himself. "I can get out easily."

"How?"

"I will just walk down through the house, dear, and out at the front door, and trust to the servants not knowing me."

He went to the door as he spoke, and turned the handle softly, and she saw him start and turn pale.

"Oh, Heaven!" he murmured.

"What is it?" she cried, flying to his side.

"The door is fast. We are trapped, Alma—locked in."

"Langham must have done it when she went out, and somebody is coming to the other door along the corridor. It can be no one but Lord Nortonshall. What shall we do?"

"What door is this?" asked Frank, trying another, which was locked.

"A room my lord occupies sometimes."

"I'll try the window, then."

"There's nothing between it and an underground area protected by iron spikes. You'll be killed on the spot."

The footsteps outside were very audible now, and like a hunted deer Francis Vavasour turned from one place to another, seeking for a way to escape, and finding none.

"What door is this?" he asked, turning to the only remaining one—that of the little ante-room, which was half boudoir, half dressing-room.

"There's no outlet from there," she said, despairingly; "but it is better than nothing. Hide in there, and Heaven help us both."

All this passed in far less time than it takes to tell it, and pressing a burning kiss upon her hand, Frank rushed into the little room.

She locked the door and put the key in her bosom, and then, trembling in every limb, she went to the door which opened into the corridor and listened.

Footsteps were approaching, of that there could be no doubt; but they were stopping now and then, as though the intruder were listening and reconnoitring, wishing to approach by very slow degrees.

Alma took an agonized moment to think what she should do, and then resolved to feign sleep.

She turned down the bright gas to a mere glowworm glimmer, and throwing a heavy shawl around her, lay down noiselessly on a couch, perfectly still and helpless from the rapid beating of her heart.

The moments appeared like hours as she listened breathlessly to the cautious tread of the person outside, and she could hardly repress a wild shriek as a hand was laid lightly on the handle of the door. The room seemed to swim round with the unhappy Lady Nortonshall as she watched it open slowly and gently, and saw a figure shrouded in a cloak enter as noiselessly as a spirit.

It moved cautiously about the room, looking here and there as it went, till it came and stood opposite to the sofa where she lay.

Alma could bear it no longer, and she turned and sat up, striving with all her might to appear calm, though every nerve was thrilling with excitement and terror.

"Who are you? What do you want?" she asked.

A white hand loosened the cloak, and it fell to the ground. Alma shrieked aloud now, in her surprise and terror. A richly-dressed lady, tall and graceful, stood before her, regarding her with pitying, mournful-looking eyes, and she recognized in her unwelcome visitor the woman that she had said was her husband's mistress—the famous actress, Claudia Wynne.

Lady Nortonshall stood up and stared at the intruder in amazement, only equalled by her terror.

"How did you come here," she asked again, "and what for? Are you not Mademoiselle Claudia?"

"Yes, madam," was the reply, in a soft, musical voice. "I am Claudia. You have heard of me, I have no doubt."

"I have."

Alma's voice took a bitter tone as she spoke.

"Who has not heard of you?"

"All the kingdom, I daresay," Claudia replied, and her voice was very sad. "I am the actress whom the world would teach you to despise—the woman whom your husband would give all his possessions to make his mistress, and yet who stands here in the chamber of his wife."

"How dare you!" exclaimed Alma, with flashing eyes, forgetting, in her indignation, her alarm and the occasion of it at the sight of her who stood there. "How dare you come here? Am I not outraged and insulted enough, without having to endure your presence? This, at least, is my room, and as mistress of this much of my husband's house, I order you to leave it instantly—instantly, do you hear?"

"I hear, madam."

"And you will not?"

"Not yet."

"Not yet! Do you dare defy me? You say my husband would give anything to make you his mistress. I have known you for such for many a long month past."

Claudia's face grew very white, and she grasped the back of a chair to steady herself, for she trembled all over.

"You taunt me bitterly," she said.

"Not more bitterly than you deserve. Once more, you hear me—go!"

"Not till I have fulfilled my mission in coming here. Some time I pray Heaven you may know me better. There is no time to show you how false are your suspicions now."

"But what do you want?"

"I came here to serve you—to save you from a great danger."

"To serve me!"

Alma laughed, a short, bitter laugh.

"Yes, to serve you."

"Thank you," the wife replied, her taunting tone coming back again. "This is too much. A nobleman's mistress forces herself into the prison of his wronged, insulted wife, and says she is come to serve her. Oh, it is too good to be real—too kindly generous on the part of a great woman like yourself, Mademoiselle Claudia!"

"Again a taunt. I do not deserve it, but I repeat my words. I came here to serve you. [illegible] have a gentleman here with you."

"A gentleman! How dare you?"

"I can dare anything that is true. You cannot deny it."

"I can. Who sent you hither with such a calumny? It is false!"

"Hardly," replied Claudia, stooping to something which lay at her feet. "There is his glove; there, on that table, the muffler he has taken from his neck. You are a bad hand at intrigue, Lady Nortonshall. Mr. Vavasour is here."

"And if he is, what is that to you? Are you jealous?"

"Jealous! Oh, no. A good man's love is not for me. You have his whole heart."

"You know that?"

"Yes; he has told me so a hundred times. But there is danger, fatal danger, in his being here. I believe there is a trap laid for you, and that your husband will come home and discover all," explained the actress.

"A trap!"

Alma gasped out the words with lips that were ashen white, and Claudia read in her wild, despairing eyes what terror wrung her heart at the thought of Lord Nortonshall's return.

"I think there is," she replied. "I am almost sure of it."

"How do you know?"

"By a letter which came to me to-day. I don't doubt but your husband has one also. The writer enjoined me to come here and see the faithlessness of the man he believes to be my lover. If it is a plot, Lord Nortonshall will be sent here to see your perfidy. Give me the key of that door, and let me send Mr. Vavasour away. I can manage it, and I will, before he is discovered. Great heavens! what is this?"

Claudia staggered back as though struck by a sudden shock. She had come close to a little set of fancy shelves, where Alma had set out a few trinkets and relics that belonged to her when she was a girl at Westerpark. A small Madonna's head, exquisitely painted, hung over it, and suspended from the same nail was the curious old crucifix given her by Maddalina Wynne, on that moonlight night by the moorside, when her father saved the poor singer from being murdered.

"What is the matter?" Lady Nortonshall asked, in surprise. "Are you ill?"

"No. I—"

Claudia could not speak for a moment for the rapid beating of her heart. That little trinket called up the memory of her mother with painful clearness; and the memory of all that had happened, all that she had suffered since her death, choked her utterance.

"Let me give you a glass of wine," Alma said, fearing she was about to faint.

"I have it here."

"No, no; it is nothing. That crucifix—how came it here? Where did you get it?"

"Oh, never mind that now—think of our dilemma. I will tell you another time."

"No, now. Speak—quick! Who gave it to you?"

"A poor woman, many years ago. My father saved her from being murdered. She had a little girl who wore it round her neck, and she took it off and put it on mine, and bade me keep it, for she said it had been blessed, and would protect me in deadly peril."

"And so it shall. Were you that little golden-haired angel? Madame, that woman was my mother."

"Yours!"

"Yes."

"How strange."

"Is it not? To her dying day she never ceased to pray for you and yours. If need be, I would give up my life to save your father's child."

Alma held out her hands, but Claudia made no responsive movement.

"No," she said, "no handclasp between you and me till you know that these apparently truthful scandals are false—till I have proved to you that you may call me sister without a blush. Heaven knows it now; you will know it as well some day."

"I believe you now. You would not come here to help me if you were—"

"What you called me just now—his mistress. No, I should not. But we must think of our safety now. This door—"

Alma took the key from her bosom and gave it into Claudia's hand.

"I have done nothing wrong," she murmured, faintly.

"Not yet."

"No, not yet; and I don't think, it would ever come to that. But we—we love each other, and it was to say good-bye he came. He is going away from England."

"I know, I know," said Claudia with a sharp pang at her heart. "To my cost I know it," she added to herself; "does not each minute as it flies come pointed with the pain of a coming farewell?"

As her fingers closed upon the key, their ears, rendered sensitive by terror, caught the sound of a distant footstep.

"Some one is coming," gasped Alma.

"Only a servant, perhaps."

"They never come here. It is my husband's step! I am lost, lost!"

The steps became distinctly audible, drawing nearer and nearer on the stairs—without a doubt Lord Nortonshall's sharp, decisive tread.

"Have courage," Claudia said, though her heart sank very low indeed.

Instinctively she shrank back into the shadow, while Alma, almost fainting, sank once more upon the couch.

Nearer and nearer came the tread—no light and cautious one, but firm and hurried; and a loud, harsh knock sounded heavily on the door.

"Open the door, madam! Open, I say!"

"It is my lord!" exclaimed Alma. "What is to be done?"

"Just what he says," whispered Claudia; "open the door. I locked it when I came in."

Lady Nortonshall rose, and with trembling hand turned the key. The door was thrown violently open, almost knocking her down, and with features distorted with rage, Lord Nortonshall burst into the room.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A LETTER AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

And if we do but watch the hour,
There never yet was human power
Which could evade, if unconfirmed,
The patient search and vigil long
Of him who treasures up a wrong.
—*Byron.*

To account for Lord Nortonshall's sudden appearance in his wife's room, we must go back a little in our story. Brown had spoken in perfect good faith when he said his master had gone out for the day; he believed he was speaking the truth.

His lordship so intended, and, in fact, he left the house in the morning not intending to return till late in the evening; but ere he had gone many yards from his own door, a lad came up and accosted him.

"Are you Lord Nortonshall, please sir?" he asked.

"I am."

The boy touched his cap, and held out his hand.

"Well, what is it?"

"A note, if you please, my lord."

"A note. Where from?"

"Don't know, my lord."

"Who gave it to you?"

"A lady."

"A lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, why did you not bring it to the house in a proper way, instead of stopping me in the street like a beggar? No lady would send a letter to a gentleman in that way. I shall not receive it."

"The lady said it was very private, sir. She bade me give it into your own hand, and she told me to wait till I saw you come out for fear any one else should get hold of it."

Lord Nortonshall's curiosity overcame his indignation at the messenger's manner, and he held out his hand for the note.

"Give it to me," he said. "I suppose you did as you were bid. Get along, there's a sixpence for you."

"Thank you, my lord; but the lady paid me."

He ran off, leaving his lordship to wonder at the phenomenon of a London boy who did not want a sixpence when it was offered him. Lord Nortonshall walked on with the note in his hand, and hailing the first Hansom he saw he jumped into it.

"Now for my secret correspondent," he said, when he was fairly on his way. "Who can it be, I wonder? More likely a new phase of begging letter. Ha! what's this?"

It was a short note, written in a round, clerkly hand, such as is practised by thousands of young men, who spend their business hours at the desk, and every word of it was as distinct as pen and ink could make it.

"MY LORD:—Advantage will be taken of your absence from home this evening by my lady and her lover. They have already arranged a meeting, and if you return home suddenly between nine and ten you will find the man who refused to fight you with the woman who declared herself so wronged and so innocent.

"FROM ONE WHO HAS SUFFERED."

"From one who has suffered," said his lordship with a sneer. "An injured husband, doubtless. Some doting fool like myself, who has found out, when too late, how much innocence lies behind fair faces and smooth speeches."

He stopped the cab abruptly, and bade the driver take him to Austin Bertram's lodgings. He was at home, but just going out, he said, but could spare an hour to Lord Nortonshall very well.

"Five minutes will do," said the peer, jumping out and rushing into Bertram's room.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked that gentleman, aghast at the strange expression on his lordship's face.

"Look here."

"What is it—a begging letter, or a *bill-heading?* There isn't much external difference generally."

"Read it, and tell me what you think of it. Is it a hoax?"

"Nothing else, you may be sure. It is a very foolish one. Of course, you'll take no notice of it."

"Ah, that's just it! I don't know."

"Why, you surely don't attach any importance to it?"

"If I thought it was true, I'd—"

"What?"

"Make this meeting their last."

"My lord!"

"I would, Bertram; as truly as I'm a living man, I'd make sure this time."

"Sure of what, my lord? I think I hardly understand you."

"Sure that I would be befooled no more by a puling woman and a green boy, that's what I'd do."

"Nay, Lord Nortonshall. If you take it so seriously, I hardly know how to advise."

"Seriously! How would you take such a thing?"

"As a jest."

"A jest?"

"Yes—just worth the paper it is written on—no more."

"I don't think this is a jest; but I'll find out. I'll surprise my lady to-night, and see what she's about."

"Be cautious, if you do, Nortonshall."

"Cautious! in my own house!"

"Cautious, not to make too much of an *exposé*, I mean. Keep down that temper of yourn, or you'll frighten your wife into fits, and raise all the neighborhood with your noise. Don't make things public till you are certain."

"Oh, don't be afraid. I'll be 'as gentle as a sucking dove,' as the fellow says in the play; but if I find him, let him look to himself, that's all—let him look to himself."

Even Austin Bertram could not repress a shiver at the expression of Lord Nortonshall's face as he spoke.

"There'll be murder," he said to himself, "if he does find him. Well, well, it's no business of mine."

"Have you no clue to the writer of this delectable epistle?" he asked, aloud.

"None."

"No idea from what direction it comes?"

"Not the slightest."

"It looks to me as though it came out of some City office."

"I know no one in the city."

"But plenty of city people know you."

"Not likely."

"Pshaw, my lord! Do you think your affairs are any secret? The difference between you and Lady Nortonshall is common talk. I think this pleasant mission comes from the East, like the wise men."

"Why?"

"Look at it—paper, seal, writing, all has a commercial look about it. Come, Nortonshall, don't worry yourself about it. I day say it is some plot of a bevy of scatter-brained clerks, who have heard something of your domestic affairs, and want to play you a trick. You will be watched if you do go home this evening, depend upon it."

"I shall."

"As you please. I fancy you will find it waste of time."

"Anyhow I shall stay for satisfaction's sake. Will you stay, too, and see what comes of it."

"I cannot."

"Is your business so important?"

"It is—very. I must leave town to-day. I don't think I shall be back to-day. If I am I will give a look in, and see how things have turned out."

"Do. I will tell you, even if I have been hoaxed."

"As you will find you have, depend upon it."

Austin Bertram's manner was perfectly cool and easy. There was nothing in it to lead any one to suppose that he knew anything about it, yet it was his hand that had penned both the note to Claudia and to Lord Nortonshall—his evil mind which led Francis Vavasour blindly into the snare, and planned the whole wicked conspiracy against the unoffending Lady Nortonshall. Claudia Wynne, with her woman's penetration, was right. She had detected a plot at once, but by whom planned she could not tell. Her sagacity led her to think it extremely probable that whoever wrote to her would write to his lordship as well.

Lord Nortonshall went away, resolving to keep away till night, and then surprise his guilty wife—if, indeed, she were guilty—and her hated lover.

He went to Bayswater; but Claudia was out, and Dorothy extremely dry and short in her answers to his many questions.

She declared that she did not know when her mistress would be at home, and volunteered no further information. She did not like her mistress's aristocratic admirer, and could hardly force herself to speak civilly to him.

So his lordship "nursed his wrath to keep it warm" all through the long hours of that weary day, and at night stole into his own house like a thief, and crept upstairs to his wife's room, with rage and revengeful passion whirling in his mind and heart.

He listened a moment before he knocked at the door, and distinctly heard his wife's voice.

"He is there!" he said to himself, and, had the door yielded to his hand, in all human probability it would have been his hapless wife's last hour on earth; but the few moments that elapsed before Alma turned the key sufficed to calm the first wild excitement of his passion.

"I must be calm," he murmured; "calm and cool. But it will be his life or mine; there can be no holding back after this."

He looked around the room a moment before his glance fell on his shrinking wife, and then, advancing to the sofa where she had thrown herself, he seized her by the wrists, and dragged her up into a sitting posture.

"Look me in the face, false woman!" he shouted, beside himself with rage. "Look at the husband you have deceived and betrayed, if you have impudence and bravado enough to do it without flinching."

He read guilt in the terror which prevented her from speaking, and again shook her roughly.

"Who is here with you?" he hissed. "Don't lie. I will have his life, were he twenty times your lover. Don't attempt to deny it!"

"I deny nothing, my lord."

She spoke calmly, though every nerve was quivering with agitation.

"You do not?"

"No, my lord. You were quite right in your suspicions. I had a companion here. These rooms are not so lively as to make me shrink from other society than that of my maid when I can get it."

"I know it—I heard you talking to him."

"Hardly, my lord. There is no 'him' in the case. You did hear me speaking, but my companion was one of whom you will thoroughly approve, unless the world wrongs you very much."

"Indeed! Who is it?"

"Claudia, my lord."

The actress emerged as she spoke from the corner where she had been standing unobserved in the peer's fury.

"I should be sorry to intrude in your house, Lord Nortonshall," she added, quietly, "but your words make me think I am most unwelcome."

"Claudia!"

He could say nothing but her name, so astonished was he.

"Even so, my lord. I can understand your surprise, but not your anger at my presence here. You have often wished to introduce me to your wife, yet you abuse her and insult me the first time I appear before her unasked."

"Insult you! Oh, no, Claudia. You know I never could do that."

His tone of endearment went to Alma's heart with a bitter pang. Even her presence did not prevent him speaking words of tenderness to another woman.

"How, in the fiend's name, did you get in here?" he went on, after a pause. "And what were the servants about not to receive you in the drawing-room, and bring my lady down to see you properly?"

"I am like all women, my lord—fond of doing *outré* things. As to how I got in, do you remember the key you gave me, and the promise you made me at the same time—that I should be welcome whenever I liked to come?"

"And so you are—more welcome than any one on the face of the earth."

"My lord, remember!"

She pointed to Alma's shrinking form as she spoke; but Lord Nortonshall's brutal nature was in the ascendant now.

"Oh, don't snivel, my lady," he said, coarsely. "Claudia and I understand each other very well."

Alma's face was bowed upon her clasped hands, and she was weeping now—shedding such bitter tears as only a woman stung and insulted in her tenderest feelings can weep. If Lord Nortonshall could have seen the bitter loathing that Claudia felt for him at his cowardly words, he would not have been so sure of his secret understanding with her. She broke from his detaining hand to bend over his suffering wife.

"Don't," she said; "don't grieve like that. He knows that he does not speak truly. Some day you will know it, and know, too, that you have had no wrong, no dishonor from the hands of Claudia Wynne."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

PROOFS.

Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmation strong
As proof of Holy Writ. —*Shakespeare.*

Alma looked up into Claudia's face with tear-blinded eyes.

"I believe you," she said, simply.

"Thank you," was the low reply.

"I believe every word you say," Lady Nortonshall repeated, "fully and truly; but such bitter words are hard to hear unmoved from a husband's lips."

Claudia pressed her hand with a firm, reassuring touch, and then turned to his lordship, and stood by his side once more, with a winning smile on her pretty lips.

"My lord," she said, "I have been here too long already. May I crave your escort down-stairs, and a glass of that delicious wine you gave me the other day? I feel rather faint."

"A glass of wine! Anything that the house affords!"

He laid his hand on the bell as he spoke, but she stopped him.

"Not here, my lord, if you please," she said, with a meaning glance at Alma, which she perfectly understood. "Down-stairs, if you please, in that pretty little snuggery of yours. I have something to tell you."

Lord Nortonshall's heart beat thick and fast, and his eyes dilated as he drew her arm in his own.

"I shall win her yet," he thought to himself. "She's coming round—her visit to these rooms was only a pretext for meeting me!"

He turned to his wife with something less of brutality in his voice and manner.

"Good-night, my lady," he said aloud. "I've been hoaxed, it seems, by some meddling fool."

"I suppose you have," she replied, quietly.

"It's well for you that it was a hoax and nothing more. If it had been true, there'd have been murder done before your eyes!"

Claudia turned to say good-night, too, and found time to whisper a rapid word of caution in Alma's ear.

"Quick! There's not a moment to be lost. He may leave me and come back—still suspicious!"

Lady Nortonshall looked the thanks she dared not speak, and they left the room. She sat like a statue till their retreating footsteps died away on the stair-case which led to the front of the house, and then springing up she unlocked the door of the little room where Francis Vavasour was concealed.

"Out!" she said. "Out, quick! there is not a single moment to lose! Oh, what a danger we have escaped!"

"Claudia is an angel!" the young man said, passionately. "A noble-hearted, unselfish creature! You will not hate her any more, Alma?"

"Hate her! Has she not saved us? But come, Frank—my love, my friend—good-bye!"

She held out her hands, but he clasped her in his arms, and pressed passionate kisses on her lips.

"My darling! my darling!" he murmured. "Heaven forgive me and help us both! I must call you mine once more, even though your husband fulfilled his threat and murdered me at your feet. Good-bye! Heaven help and comfort you, for I cannot!"

Once more he folded her in his arms, and, with a passionate, despairing kiss, he was gone.

She heard him go to the bottom of the stairs and steal cautiously along a passage which led to the back-door. A moment afterward the door closed lightly, and she knew that he was gone clear of the house and into the street.

Then her calmness deserted her, and, sinking on the floor by the side of the couch, she burst into hysterical tears.

She crouched there a long time, heeding nothing, till suddenly a light hand was laid on her shoulder, and starting up, she saw Langham.

"My lady," said that damsel, quietly, "I fear you are ill."

"No, Langham; a little low-spirited, that is all. I shall be better now you have come in."

"Ah, you have been lonely, my lady! I did not think of that. I have been gone fully two hours. It is a long time for your ladyship to be alone in these dreary rooms, for they are dreary from their isolated position."

She laid such a seemingly spiteful emphasis on the word "alone" that her mistress glanced keenly at her to see whether there were any suspicion in her face. There was none. Langham looked as demure as ever, and there was nothing about the room to betray the presence of an intruder.

"I am glad you are come," Alma said again, after a few minutes. "I was just thinking I would undress myself if you did not get back soon. I shall be glad to get to bed."

"To bed, my lady!"

"Yes; I don't feel very well this evening. It is very languid weather, I think."

"As your ladyship pleases, of course, but—"

"But what? Am I to have rules laid down when I shall go to bed, and when I shall get up?"

"Oh, no, my lady; certainly not! I was only thinking."

"What?"

"What I shall say to my lord if he sends for you."

"He will not send, he is much more pleasantly occupied."

"He is out, your ladyship."

"Oh, dear no: he is at home."

"At home!"

"Yes; he is down-stairs in his writing-room with Mdlle. Claudia Wynne. They have just left me."

Langham was completely mystified. She was certain Lady Nortonshall had had a secret visitor, but how had he escaped her master's eyes and ears?

She made no remark, but attended to her duties, undressed her mistress and saw her into bed, still puzzling deeply in her own mind over what she had said. She waited till she thought it likely his lordship would be alone, and then went softly down-stairs and knocked at the door of his room.

"Come in," he said, in no very amiable tones, and when she presented herself, his only greeting was a surly—

"Well!"

"I am afraid I intrude, my lord; but—"

"No, you don't. What have you got to say? Out with it. I know you don't come here for nothing."

"No, indeed, my lord."

"Well, what is it?"

"When your lordship engaged me to attend on my lady, you gave me to understand that, in consequence of unfortunate differences between you, my duties—"

"Hang it, woman, come to the point at once, can't you?" he exclaimed, irascibly. "I told you you were to let me know if your mistress did anything my wife should not do. Now, what has she done? for, of course, you are come to tell me something."

"I am, my lord."

"Out with it, then."

"Only that my lady has a lover that she receives in secret," Langham replied, coolly. "You told me to speak plainly, my lord, and I have done so at your bidding."

"Nothing like it," he replied, with a coarse laugh. "I like to call a spade a spade when I talk. But your news is stale, Miss Langham. That my lady has a lover I know well, and half London knows it too, worse luck. That she would receive him if she could, I believe most faithfully; that she has done it, I doubt. She is too well taken care of for that."

"She has, my lord; not an hour ago." Lord Nortonshall laughed again.

"So they have hoaxed you too, Langham, have they?" he said.

"Hoaxed, my lord!"

"Yes. That same story has kept me in town all day to-day, and brought me up the back staircase of my own house like a thief this evening. My wife had a visitor; but it was a lady, and I was made to feel not a little ashamed in the matter, I can tell you."

"Still, in the face of all this, I think I am right, my lord. If your lordship will only listen to me for a moment, I think you will find you have been hoaxed, but not by any one out of doors."

"By whom, then?"

"By my lady, and by whoever your lordship found visiting her in her rooms."

"Go on; don't make such a long-winded story, but be quick. I am sick of hearing about it. Sit down on that chair, and tell me all you know; and in the fiend's name cut it short, or you'll drive me mad."

Thus adjured, Langham sat down on the edge of the chair and began her story. She was not afraid of her master. She knew she was necessary to him, and she braved his wrath in a way that none of the other servants would have dared to do.

"My lady gave me leave to go out this evening," she said, "very readily, I thought."

"Glad to get rid of you for a bit, I dare say."

"No doubt, my lord. She had previously received a note."

"From whom?"

"My lady did not show it to me, your lordship."

"No, but you read it. Don't mince matters. Out with it. Where did it come from?"

"From Mr. Francis Vavasour, my lord."

Lord Nortonshall ground an oath between his teeth with such ferocity that even Langham shuddered.

"What was in it?" he demanded, fiercely.

"A few words, only saying he should be here to-night."

"Ha!" exclaimed the peer, rubbing his hands, and chuckling, as though to catch his wife tripping were some great joy. "Well, well, go on! What else?"

"My lady gave me leave to go out, and I was absent about two hours. I returned by the back way, and within a dozen yards of the door a man coming in the opposite direction ran against me."

"Coming from the house?"

"I presume so, my lord."

"Why?"

"Because when he raised his hat to apologize, I knew him at once. It was Mr. Vavasour. He has been frequently pointed out to me as a person of mark."

"As my wife's lover, I suppose?"

"No, your lordship, as a man saved from a wreck by almost a miracle."

"No matter—you know him?"

"Perfectly."

"Go on."

"I went up the staircase, of which you keep the key, my lord, found the door unlocked, my lady in hysterics on the floor by the sofa, and these lying about the room."

She laid two articles on the table before him as he spoke, and he recognized in one of them a scarf of Indian embroidery, of a peculiar fashion and texture, which Francis Vavasour constantly wore.

He subdued his rage, though he could have torn the unoffending fabric to pieces with his trembling hands, and spoke to Langham once more.

"You may be mistaken. Mr. Vavasour may have given this to Mdlle. Claudia. They are very intimate, and she was my wife's visitor."

"It is hardly an article a lady would receive," said Langham, with a look of triumph. "At any rate she could not wear this!"

The second article was conclusive. It was a man's thick leather glove, the curve of the hand from which it had been pulled remaining in it still.

(*To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 9.*)

☞ A baby was recently born in a Pullman palace car near St. Louis. The lady was going on a visit to her mother at Cincinnati, and the advent of the little stranger was very unexpected. Fortunately, a doctor was found among the passengers, so that the distinguished arrival received the attention to which it was entitled. A general contribution was levied on the lady passengers for garments which might be used by the baby, and by the time St. Louis was reached both mother and child were reported to be in excellent condition. It was a girl.

The Smuggler's Daughter.

BY JACK RATLIN.

The rocky shores of the English coast, in the far north, were shining under the rays of the rapidly declining sun. Bare brown rocks looked down upon a shining sand, and in the distance dimpled the waves of the "Irish" sea. A grand scene—and so thought the beautiful girl who, standing upon the summit of the cliff, looked out across the sea.

"They ought to know the danger if they come," she muttered to herself. "Oh, if I could warn them of the peril which hangs over them, I would give my life to save them; and I know that they are doomed to lie in prison if they are not warned."

She stood bareheaded, looking out to sea. A beautiful English face, with sunny brown hair and eyes of "Heaven's own azure." The winds of the sea had browned her fair cheek, but the rich blood mantling under it gave her complexion a rich, creamy look. Such was Myrtle Dare, the daughter of Captain Dare, of the Osprey. Unconsciously she had spoken aloud, and was surprised to hear a low, taunting laugh close at her elbow. Looking up quickly, she saw a man in the uniform of an officer of the "coast-guard" standing by her side—a dark-browed man, in the prime of life, with an evil, forbidding look in his dark but handsome face.

"You should remember one thing, my pretty Myrtle," he said, laughing again. "Never speak your thoughts aloud, or some one might chance to hear you."

"Why are you here, Job Dean?" she retorted angrily. "If I spoke my thoughts of *you* aloud, you would not be flattered, to say the least. Your room is better than your company, I can assure you."

"Thanks, a thousand times; so very complimentary, you know," replied Job Dean in a mocking way. "Come, my dear; why should we always play at cross purposes. I have told you that I mean to have you for my wife; or, failing in that, I will have a noble vengeance. You are the daughter of a smuggling captain; I am Job Dean, an officer in the coast-guard of the Queen's excise. I do not think that you can claim that the offer of my hand can in any way degrade you."

"It does—it can," replied the girl. "You are a spy and rascal, officer though you may be. There is no petty meanness to which you would not stoop to accomplish your own base ends. You sneak into honest houses and listen to every word dropped, and use it against the speakers. You drink and smoke with men you intend to betray. A marriage with such a man would degrade *any* woman, I care not how low in social rank, who has been true to herself."

"Sing your song out, my pretty girl," hissed Dean, grating his teeth savagely together. "The time will come when you will repent in dust and ashes the words you have dared to speak against your husband."

"My husband—never!"

"We shall see, my dear, we shall see. Did I say the time *would* come? It *has* come. This very night the Osprey is expected off the coast, and will land her cargo at the Black Rock Cave. I shall be there, girl; I shall be there."

"Perhaps they may get warning," replied Myrtle, drawing her slight form up proudly.

"Little fear of that. At the moment when the goods are landed the revenue sloop will attack the Osprey. Your father will be taken or killed, and George Lawton, if he escapes a bullet or cutlass, may find it hard to evade a rope, for I will swear that I saw him kill the Coast-Guard Ramsay at the Hanging Cliff."

"You lie, Job Dean," cried the girl, advancing with uplifted hand, "for you know well that he did not kill the guard."

"So you say, but he was there, and if I swear to the fact, it will go hard toward convicting him. Listen to me, Myrtle. If you will promise to marry me, the Osprey may land her cargo safely for all I do, and I will even allow the man I hate, George Lawton, to escape my vengeance."

"You coward, you low villain," cried the girl. "Marry you! I would sooner die myself and see all I love perish than so degrade myself. The worst you can do is bliss compared with such a fate."

He raised his finger in a gesture of mingled warning and threat, and without adding a word, turned and walked rapidly away. Myrtle stood for a moment in deep thought, and then leaving the cliff, she started on a run toward the fishing village, which lay nestling at the foot of the crags. A rough sailor lad, basking in the sun at the head of the little pier, rose as her light foot came down the pier.

"I want you, Billy Boyce," she cried, breathlessly. "Is your boat in good order?"

"Never better," replied the lad.

"Dare you risk a night trip in her if you can earn ten pounds?"

"It's going to blow great guns afore morning," replied the boy, "but for ten pounds I'd do anything, so I'm your man. But look here; I can't manage the boat alone, and there ain't ne'er another man to go, for my mate is sick."

"You must go," cried the girl wildly. "It is to save the Osprey from the revenue cutter. I know how to sail a boat as well as any man upon the coast, and I'll go with you."

Billy jumped into the boat which lay at the pier-head and looked into the little locker to see what provisions were there, and sounded the water breaker with his foot.

"Come on," he cried, briefly. "I'm your man any day in the week if it's to save the Osprey."

Myrtle followed him rapidly into the boat, and they pushed off. Myrtle took the tiller and Billy ran the jib, belayed the jib sheet, and seized the halyards of the heavy sail. The boat feeling the distended jib began to gather way, and letting her fall off a little, she slipped rapidly through the water.

"Boat ahoy," cried an angry voice. "Heave to there, in the Queen's name."

"It's Job Dean," said Billy in a low voice. "Shan't notice him, eh?"

"No; up with the sail. Never mind his bellowing. Belay; hoist away on the peak halyards, belay and make fast. Haul aft the sheet; steady. Now we go through the water."

Job Dean was dancing wildly on the pier-head and threatening them with all sorts of vengeance if they did not return. He even fired a pistol, but the shot fell short, and as the boat shot out of the entrance of the little bay they saw him mount his horse and ride wildly down the coast to the south.

"After the cutter," said Billy. "Cuss him, I'd like to see him seized up to the gratings with the cat playing rub-a-dub-dub on his bare back. You know where you want to go, Myrtle?"

She said nothing, but the moment they were clear of the shore, headed due north, creeping along the coast. She knew that the Osprey always came down from the north, as she ran along the Irish coast by daylight, reached the English coast at nightfall, and came down at dusk. The evening closed in and still the boat crept up the coast, keeping about a league from it.

"There are the Black Rocks," cried Myrtle, "and as I live there comes the Osprey."

Scarcely half a mile distant, clearly revealed in the light of the rising moon, they saw a clipper-built schooner coming down before the wind. A moment more and they had hailed her, and the schooner was thrown up into the wind, the boat rounded to under her stern and Myrtle sprang on deck.

"Away you go, Billy," she cried, "keep out of the way of the cutter."

The boat cast off and slipped away toward the coast.

Captain Dare, a grizzled old sailor, and George Lawton, his handsome mate, the lover of pretty Myrtle, sprang forward in surprise.

"Don't stop to dally," she cried, sharply. "You are betrayed. Job Dean and his men are in waiting at the Black Rocks, and the cutter is in the offing waiting for you. Go about as soon as you can and be off."

It was lively work. The schooner went about like a top and headed out to sea. As her sails distended they caught a glimpse of other sails close aboard, and knew that the Queen's cruiser was upon them. So close, indeed, that it seemed impossible for them to escape. Scarcely a hundred fathoms separated the schooners when a hoarse hail and stern command to "heave to" was heard across the water.

"You take the wheel, George," hissed Captain Dare; "and you, boys, be handy at the foresail."

"Lower your peak," cried the voice of Job Dean. "Lower away, or stand a broadside."

The peak went down so suddenly that the Osprey seemed to come to a standstill at once; and as the schooners were running side by side, the cutter forged ahead. Then, at the order of Captain Dare, the men sprang to the halyards, and to the utter disgust of the revenue men the Osprey shot under their stern, and was away before the wind, leaving them rapidly astern. A perfect howl of baffled vengeance burst from the lips of Job Dean, and the cutter wore; but by this time the Osprey, the swiftest schooner on the coast, was far in advance. The cutter followed, yawing and firing her bow chasers, but the Osprey disappeared in the gathering gloom and was safe.

Captain Dare never made another smuggling trip. At his daughter's earnest solicitations, he gave up the illegal business. The Osprey was sold and a larger craft purchased, and George Lawton engaged in lawful traffic as her captain. Job Dean never troubled them, for upon the night when the cutter chased them he was lost overboard, and his body was never found.

Myrtle Dare is now the wife of her sailor lover, and will be faithful to him, even to the end.

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

☞ Toledo has a policeman six feet seven inches high.

☞ A Pottsville man aged sixty-nine has wooed and won a maiden of fifteen.

☞ The rule of "no wine" is becoming common at New York receptions.

☞ Michigan convicts are no longer compelled to wear striped uniforms.

☞ Flora Searles, a courageous young lady, plunged into the water at Lewisburg, Pa., and saved a boy from drowning.

☞ A woman in New York has been sent to prison for seven years for stealing a six-year old child.

☞ Twenty-one United States pensioners are said to be among the inmates of Auburn prison.

☞ A boy at Benton Harbor, Michigan, lately committed suicide because his mother said he was a great trouble to her.

☞ A professor in Montreal recently introduced two tame skunks, to illustrate a lecture on the diffusion of odors.

☞ Cornish, Mass., is well provided with flags, an eccentric citizen having left $1000, the interest of which is annually to be expended in bunting.

☞ A young lady of Logansport, recently sent a young man four quarts of butternuts as a token of acknowledgment for having saved her from drowning.

☞ An English court recently ruled exactly opposite to the opinions of American judges, deciding that a railroad ticket marked "good for this day only," could not be used by a passenger on any other day.

☞ A test case is said to be preparing in Chicago, in which a man is charged with refusing to be vaccinated and having the small-pox in consequence, endangering the lives and health of his neighbors.

☞ The late great fog in London was so dense as to cause all traffic to cease. The streets at mid-day were as dark as night, and men and boys were lighting pedestrians on their way with torches.

☞ A female justice in Wyoming recently had her husband brought before her on a charge of drunkenness. The poor man was penitent, but the justice was inexorable, and inflicted the penalty of a fine, and then, as a loving spouse, paid the fine herself to prevent her husband going to prison.

☞ The British exploring ship Challenger recently touched at the Island of Tristan d'Acuna, and found two Germans living there, who were heartily tired of playing Robinson Crusoe, and gladly availed themselves of the opportunity of leaving.

☞ A luxury of ancient Rome has been revived in New York, where an establishment offers pure milk baths to ladies, for the improvement of their health and the beautifying of their complexions, at five dollars a bath.

☞ A woman with a little child appeared in the streets of Berlin, N. Y., recently, and after begging a little food, disappeared. She was found next morning, her child by her side frozen to death, and herself quite insensible. She was taken in charge by the town authorities, but died before anything could be done for her.

☞ During a recent storm, near Pacific, Tennessee, a cabin was blown down, and an infant child that was sleeping in the cabin at the time the storm struck it, was carried a considerable distance and safely deposited under the trestlework of the railroad, where it was found alive and unhurt the next morning.

☞ It is related that a Swiss gend'arme was recently conducting two prisoners to Zurich by railway. One of them jumped out of the train, and the gend'arme, confiding the other to the conductor's care, also jumped from the train in pursuit of the fugitive. The latter took refuge in a wood, and eluded the official until a peasant with a dog, aided him in the search. They found and captured the prisoner, for which gallant act the gend'arme received a reward of seven francs—about $1.40.

☞ A negro in Boston complained at a police station that a brother colored man had broken a chair all to splinters over his head. Being told there were no marks on his cranium, he said: "No! 'e didn't make no marks, but 'e smashed de ch'ar all ter pieces, and de ch'ar belonged ter me."

☞ A woman riding in a wagon to the railroad station in East Bridgewater, Mass., was thrown thirty-five feet by the locomotive striking the vehicle. Picking herself up from the debris she calmly surveyed the scene, and remarked, "There, it was only last week that I paid twenty-five dollars for repairing that wagon!"

☞ The managers of a girls' industrial school in New Haven, recently got up an interesting entertainment for the amusement of the pupils. It consisted of a mock marriage between the superintendent and his wife, the ceremony being performed by a young lady teacher. The pupils sat in rapt attention during the performance, and no doubt thought it preferable to the circus.

☞ Near Knoxville, Tenn., it is said there is a mule which has been but one time outside of its stable in twenty years, and then it was taken out by the soldiers during the war, and as they could not use the animal, it was immediately replaced. It is said that its hoofs have grown to the length of about twelve inches, turning up at the ends, while its mane reaches to the ground.

☞ President Nott, in his wise old age, once took a newly-married pair aside, and said: "I want to give you this advice, my children. Don't try to be happy. Happiness is a shy nymph, and if you chase her, you will never catch her. But just go quietly on and do your duty and she will come to you."

The Beginnings of Disease.—It is as true as that "great oaks from little acorns grow," that frightful diseases are often engendered by seemingly trifling ailments. Casual fits of indigestion superinduce chronic dyspepsia, occasional bilious attacks culminate in fixed diseases of the liver, intermittent twinges in the legs and arms degenerate into the continuous agony of acute rheumatism. Not that such disastrous consequences are inevitable. Far from it. They are attributable to neglect. A few doses of HOSTETTER'S STOMACH BITTERS will always cure casual indigestion or an ordinary bilious affection, or arrest the premonitory symptoms of rheumatism. It is true that when dyspepsia, or liver complaint, or rheumatism, or constipation, or nervous debility, or sick headache has become a permanent evil, and has even baffled the skill of eminent physicians and resisted all the ordinary remedies, it may still be eradicated by the Bitters; but it is easier, as Macbeth suggests, to crush the serpent's egg than the grown serpent.

SYMPTOMS OF LIVER COMPLAINT.

A sallow or yellow color of skin, or yellowish brown spots on face and other parts of body; dullness and drowsiness with frequent headache; dizziness, bitter or bad taste in mouth, dryness of throat and internal heat; palpitation; in many cases a dry, teasing cough, with sore throat, unsteady appetite, raising of food, choking sensation in throat; distress, heaviness, bloated or full feeling about stomach and sides, pain in sides, back or breast, and about shoulders; colic, pain and soreness through bowels, with heat; constipation alternating with diarrhœa; piles, flatulence, nervousness, coldness of extremities; rush of blood to head, with symptoms of apoplexy, numbness of limbs, especially at night; cold chills alternating with hot flashes, kidney and urinary difficulties; dullness, low spirits, unsociability and gloomy forebodings. Only a few of above symptoms likely to be present at one time. All who use Dr. Pierce's Alt. Ext. or Golden Medical Discovery for Liver Complaint and its complications are loud in its praise.

A CURE OF LIVER DISEASE.

RUSK, TEXAS, May 10th, 1873.

DR. R. V. PIERCE:

Dear Sir—My wife last year at this time was confined to her bed with Chronic Liver Disease. I had one of the best doctors to see her, and he gave her up to die, when I came upon some of your medicine. I bought one bottle and commenced giving it. She then weighed 82 lbs.; now she weighs 140 lbs. and is robust and hearty. She has taken eight bottles in all—so you see I am an advocate for your Medicines. WM. MEAZEL.

Ayer's American Almanac has arrived, and is now ready for delivery, gratis, by our druggists, to all who call for it. Our readers may be surprised to know that this little pamphlet, which has become so much a favorite in our section, has quite the largest circulation of any one book in the world, except the Bible. It is printed in many languages, and scattered through many nations, as well as supplied to almost the entire population of our own vast domain. Every family should keep it, for it contains information which all are liable to require, when sickness overtakes them, and which may prove invaluable from being at hand in season. If you take our advice, you will call and get an AYER'S ALMANAC, and when got, keep it.

No. 259. Tapeworm No. 259.

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SATURDAY EVENING POST.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, JAN. 3, 1874

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OR,

The Cave of the Counterfeiters.

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FRENCH HOME LIFE.

It has been denied that the French have any home life, the absence in their language of any direct word for home, making part of the argument, that they live in public and for society, the *mariages de convenance* established among them, striking at the root of home joys. The amount of untruth in this is very clearly shown by an English writer who has lived in France for a quarter of a century, amid ties and affections that enable him to speak from insight, discriminating between shows and realities.

Many things that make for home pleasure are specialties of effort with them. They cultivate family affection more continuously and zealously than is at all common either in England or America. In the adornment of the house, the care bestowed on meals, the education of children, one object is kept steadily in view, as if indeed it were a problem to be worked out—given the means and opportunities, to extract the greatest amount of happiness. And they succeed wonderfully well considering their false system of marriage. It is a lesson to those who come together under better auspices—truer and closer relations in the beginning of their married life. How often the flame that seems glowing enough at first to fuse the pair into one, gradually dies out for want of feeding! People forget that life does not stand still, that if it does not advance, it recedes; if there is not growth there is decay. Married happiness in France not unfrequently implies among the educated classes, a ceaseless employment of intelligence and skill, such as we rarely know of here. The mass, of course, acts like the mass elsewhere; it takes life as it finds it; "lets it rip," as Americans say. But many there understand and realize that the tie between man and woman cannot preserve its vigor and its first eager truth unless the elements which compose it are skilfully replaced and thoughtfully renewed as they successively wear out and gradually cease to produce their old effect.

"The general tendency of wives—in France as elsewhere—is to regard happiness as a vested right, as a natural fact, as a permanent condition, as a self-sufficing, self-maintaining state, which ought to go on and last because it has once begun. Most of them violently revolt the first time they are asked to own that married happiness may be, on the contrary, and by its very essence, the most ephemeral of all short-lived creations. They take man's love as a property and a due; they fancy that it is the husband's duty to keep up that love without any special aid from themselves. They let themselves be loved, but they do not help love to last; as Johnson said, 'They know how to make nets, but not how to make cages!'

"But in France there are certainly a good many people who show us what skill and science can elaborate from ordinary sources; they show us the height of satisfaction to which we are capable of climbing in the relation between man and wife, if we will but regard that relation as a plant to be sedulously cultivated, and not as a weed to be left to struggle unaided for existence."

Thus the French do extract large results from matrimony; though, in the view of the author I have quoted, they fail in one of its most important uses. "The relatively childless firesides of France are evidence that, whatever be their love of children, the French shrink purposely from having them; and this tendency has gone on steadily gaining strength, notwithstanding the increase of wealth, until the present yearly birth-rate in France is the lowest in the world. The rejection of paternity is a consequence of the excessive prudence with which the entire subject is handled; they do not marry unless they think they can afford it; they do not have children unless they think they can provide for them. It in no way affects the attachment between man and wife; it in no way diminishes their affection for their children when they have them. On the contrary their family tenderness is demonstrative and excessive."

This writer admires, in contrast, the feeling that leads to improvident marriages in England. It is at least plucky to dare responsibilities—commendable to trust in God rather than in Mr. Malthus. This pluck, by the way, he denies altogether to the boys of France; he calls them sneaks; their meanness of nature partly inherited, but far more a consequence of education. "They may become learned, and they do become affectionate—but positively they do not become what we mean by manly. Charming companions, brilliant talkers, loving husbands and tender fathers, full of warm sensations and flowing emotions, they have distinctly proved themselves to be utterly incapable of growing into wise citizens or wise men."

Of course this is cause enough for national defeat. But to be beaten in battle is not of so much consequence; France would be all right again in five years, if her malady were not in the very heart-blood of her people. They have gone in for money-making, and for easy, pleasurable existence. They have been pursuing little things and little ends, and they have grown incapable of big ones. Two generations of vitiated education have led them unknowingly to this. Their boys are not taught pluck, and honesty and frankness. They lack political conviction, religious faith; when they are little they say their prayers, but there is no stuff in them. The writer referred to acknowledges that in the higher classes, where money is unimportant, there are still a few models of gallant gentlemen. In the late war the great names of France were everywhere on the list of killed and wounded; but despite the example, he alleges that the nation did not follow. The population of France were formed in another school; not one to make manly men. In the upper ranks alone, boy-character assumes a vigorous shape.

In this grave condemnation the girls have no part. They are frank and straightforward. In the higher moral qualities, resolute attachment to duty, self-sacrificing devotion, unyielding maintenance of principle and religious faith, which is the key to all the rest, the women stand incontestably far above the men. It is an enormous error to suppose them vain coquettes, living to amuse themselves. For one who goes to balls, there are fifty who stop at home, and these are the women who rear French girls, striving above all things to keep them pure. Growing up in constant contact with her mother, the girl learns the faculty of conversation, habit of her own language, manners, tact, and even experience of the world—in training for a woman from her very cradle. The book-learning of French women generally stops with the school-days, but this education by contact, the absorption, assimilation and reproduction of other people's ideas, goes on through their entire lifetime, and accounts for their amazing success in conversation—seeming to know everything.

The French language is singularly poor in terms of tenderness and affection. For love and like, and for wife and woman, there are no distinct words. But, "where France, and indeed all Europe, beats us, is in that adorable *tutoiement*, that sweet use of 'thou,' which marks out so sharp a line between those who really love and the chilly world outside. There is no explaining to an Englishman what *tutoiement* means; there is no suggesting to him what a depth of fondness is contained in *tu*. When the subtle intensity of its sweetness has penetrated to our heart, we stare with wonder at the unhappy people who say *you* to wife and child; from our soul we pity them, and wonder whether they really think that 'you' means love."

In dress and furniture and manners, the French are confessedly superior, but most indisputably are they artists in the use of food; taking for their rule that everything which is in food ought to be left in it by the cook, and be found in it by the eater, which combines economy with good eating. To boil meat or vegetables, for instance, is to extract from it, first, its volatile aroma, then its essences and juices, and finally, its power of nutrition; aroma, essence, juice and strength go out into the hot water, leaving behind them the fibre which they have quitted. This is soup-making, and in France even the water in which vegetables have been boiled, is kept as a basis for vegetable soups. In living well at small cost, all the world may go to school to the French people, in their homes, not in hotels and restaurants. The genius of cookery is naturally implanted in their heads and fingers. Even a Normandy farm-girl who has spent her youth in guarding her master's geese and turkeys, very quickly learns to make fried cream. *Crème frite*, as our author describes it, "consists in balls of hot, liquid creamy custard cased in a diaphanous golden pellicle of frizzled batter; in the mouth they burst and melt with a result that is fantastically delicious."

Owing to their careless frankness, we see the French pretty nearly as they are, good and bad. "Other people cover themselves with hypocrisies and sham; but as the '*nation de trop de paroles*' does not seem, in this respect, at least, to care what its neighbors think, it shows itself as it is. Socially there is very little humbug and scarcely any snobbishness in France. There is no recognized upper-class to struggle after or to imitate." S. P.

☞ "One must practice economy in youth," says Voltaire, "and then one is surprised in old age to find what an amount one has by degrees accumulated. That is the time of life when fortune becomes most necessary, and that is the time at which I now find myself in enjoyment of it. After having lived with kings, I live like a king, notwithstanding immense losses."

WORLD-WORN.

BY MARIE E. LADD.

The flowers were at our feet, low at our feet,
And on the wind's soft breath came incense sweet,
While we walked on as in a dream that day
We dreamed the hours away.

Since then the years, how many, have tolled on,
And we with steady eye now look upon
The tangled path that meets us just before,
For now we dream no more.

And if we meet, 'tis with a careless nod,
For all the common road we daily plod
Is thick as weeds with cumbering cares o'ercast,
And we forget the past.

Or if remembered it is but with shame,
We call that early love a sickly flame,
For since that time we both have grown so wise,
Such folly we despise.

Yet I am weak enough, my friend, to-day
To grieve for that old self, that on the way
I left behind so many years ago,
When those soft winds did blow.

LETTERS FROM ZIG.

"THE MERRY CHRISTMAS TIME."

The real date of the birth of Christ is a matter which the highest authorities have not yet settled. Some contend that it must have been earlier than the latter part of December, because it is said in Luke that at the time of the birth of Christ shepherds kept watch over their flocks in the fields by night, and at that time of year it is so cold in Judea that it would not have been possible for shepherds to watch their flocks out-doors at night. Still, the seasons may have changed—or the season in question been unusually mild. The mid-winter festival which we celebrate now under the name of Christmas is said by the historians to be in its origin many hundred years older than the time of the Saviour. It is, the same authorities allege, a mixture of pagan and Christian ceremonies—Roman, Druidical and Christian. Pagan nations of all ages have worshipped the sun as the source of light and warmth, and so, at about the time of Christmas, when the days began again to lengthen, and the sun-god promised once more to smile on the earth in a new spring and fruit-season, the Romans held the grand festival of the Saturnalia. This festival was the occasion of the greatest joy and feasting, the merriest season of the year. And the early Christians wisely ingrafted our holiday of Christmas on the ancient Roman festival of the Saturnalia, which was the easiest mode of abolishing the old custom; thus an ancient and pagan observance glided imperceptibly into a new and Christian one. It was also the custom of the ancients to offer a gift of a sheaf of wheat to Ceres, the daughter of Saturn and the goddess of grains. From this usage of the old heathens, it is supposed by some writers, that our custom of giving Christmas gifts has originated. In some parts of England, and elsewhere, for aught I know, to this day it is the custom to have a dish of frumenty, or furmety, to be eaten on Christmas. Frumenty is wheat boiled in milk, and this may really be but a trace of the ancient offering to Ceres, the goddess of wheat. If so, the usage has outlived even the recollection of Ceres—those who partake of frumenty at Christmas mostly never heard of the august lady Ceres; they would be properly horrified if anybody should tell them they were making an offering to an old heathen goddess, and of course really they are not; and yet the fact may remain that furmety and feasting at Christmas are the relics of pagan superstition. Mince-pie and roast turkey taste none the worse on that account, however; for nobody eats them as offerings to a pagan god.

The custom of decking houses and churches with evergreens at Christmas, it is also said by the historians, comes down to Christianity and civilization from the gray old ages of the awful and mysterious Druidical religion. When we deck our churches and happy homes with green winter-wreaths this pleasant Christmas time, we shall not be apt to remember, however, that this custom of evergreen trimming is a relic of Druidism. In those pagan ages, when human imagination peopled earth, air and forest with unseen spirits, men believed that the ice and frost of winter, which stripped the trees of their foliage, drove out the wood-spirits that resided among the leaves and branches, and left them out in the cold. Therefore in December people profusely decorated their dwellings with green branches, wreaths and leaves, that the friendly wood-spirits might come in and take up their abode with men until warm weather brought out the leaves again, and they could return to their own proper homes. Rather a kindly, pretty hospitality that was, wasn't it?

The superstitions, beliefs and traditions which have grown up around the observance of Christmas, like clusters of mistletoe around a bale old tree, are innumerable. More of these curious traditions still linger in the rural districts of England than perhaps anywhere else. A book to which I am indebted for much information about Christmas, as well as other holidays, states that in some parts of England there exists the belief that on Christmas Eve, at twelve o'clock, the oxen all go down upon their knees in their stalls. Perhaps the notion arises from the passage in the New Testament history of Christ, where he was laid in a manger, among the cattle, at his birth. A countryman in Devonshire told our author that he and several others had once watched some oxen in a stable at twelve o'clock of a Christmas Eve, to find if this belief were correct. He said that none of the animals thus assumed the attitude of devotion, however, except just the two oldest oxen, and that at exactly twelve o'clock these two old fellows went down upon their knees and made a "cruel moan, like Christian creatures." The countryman solemnly assured the gentleman that this was a fact.

In Yorkshire, it was anciently the custom to dance in the churches on Christmas Day, and the people of those days thought themselves just as good Christians as we think ourselves. Fancy how it would seem to have a jolly big dancing party in a church! There is a curious old poem which makes prophecies in rhyme, from the day of the week on which Christmas falls. According to this old poem, we are to have a very stormy winter, this winter following the Christmas of 1873:

"Yf Crystemas Day on Thursday be,
A wyndy wynter see shalle yee,
Of wyndes and wederes all wicked,
And harde tempestes stronge and thycke."

If the old rhyme had said "A *muddy* wynter see shalle yee," it would have come nearer the truth, so far, for this winter.

But whatever the historians may say respecting the origin of Christmas and its observances, one thing is certain, it is the gladdest, merriest time of the year for the dear little children, and as such, good friends, let us keep it sacred forever and ever. They believe what we tell them, and are happy and merry on that glad day, if we make them so. Let us make the beloved little ones happy and merry. Let us decorate for these little ones beautiful evergreen Christmas trees, and load them with the gifts which shall remind them of the birth of the child Jesus. Let us tell them over and over again that exceedingly doubtful old fable of Santa Claus, who comes down the chimney with his gallant reindeer team, and his sleigh-load of beautiful gifts.

To the bright imagination of childhood, that doubtful old fable is the essence of all poetry and all romance. Let us make the children perfectly joyous for one day in the year. Trouble will come to them soon enough, and labor, and suffering. Soon enough, aye! all too soon they will learn the pitiless, practical meaning of this dry, hard, wooden life of ours. Christmas is a day to be glad. Let us make the most of it for the beloved little children, so that in the cold, cruel years which are to come after, the Christmas day of their childhood shall stand out in their memory forever green, bright, warm and beautiful,—a summer island in a wintry sea. Christmas comes but once a year. Let us make the most of it for ourselves, that we may keep our own hearts always young and tender. Finally, good friends, readers of the Post, one and all:

"God rest you, merry gentlemen,
May nothing you dismay!"

ZIG.

Biographical Sketches.

CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

BY MAURICE F. EGAN.

There are many men, who three months ago were as rich as Dives, clothed in purple and fine linen, cowering to-day before ruin and poverty. The world thought them secure, strong and firm, above the ordinary level of mankind; but the crisis came, and these demi-gods sank, shrinking and despairing, beneath the shock.

Read of the suicides caused by the recent financial depression. Men should be made of sterner stuff than to flee, like cowards, from a sea of troubles which ebbs as well as flows.

Patience, perseverance and prayerful work can do anything in this world. Taking the story of a woman's life, let us prove this briefly.

More than forty and less than seventy years ago, a little girl was born in Boston. This little girl was called Charlotte, and the name of her family was Cushman.

Early in life she learned what failure meant, for her father failed, and she learned also how to bear that hardest of burdens—genteel poverty.

Her mother worked and struggled womanfully with eager hands, ready to grasp any opportunity of honest labor for her children. Charlotte was of four children the eldest. Charlotte could sing a little; but this gift might be cultivated until the girl could teach others, the anxious mother thought. The Cushman family were glad to procure the necessaries of life, and a music-teacher was a luxury. But Charlotte's mother did not give up her idea. She found an acquaintance who offered to supply vocal instruction for the young girl. Charlotte studied and practised. Her voice contained deep, rich tones. She might become a renowned prima donna or a plodding teacher. To become either she must work, and she worked unremittingly. She sang in a choir, and her first appearance on any stage was in the chorus of the Handel and Haydn Society.

The operatic singers, Mr. and Mrs. Wood, appeared in Boston. Mrs. Wood wanted a contralto, and she heard of Charlotte's rich, strong voice. The result was that the girl sang a duet with the prima donna, and made her début in the "Marriage of Figaro." She did not sing in opera, however, before she had gone through much anxiety, and her mother was forced to contract a debt in order to purchase the necessary dress.

She was now launched upon the tide of lyrical life. Articled for three years to Maestro Maeder, he taught her on condition of receiving half of all she earned. Maeder's wife possessed a contralto voice, and so he forced his pupil to sing soprano. She did her best to change her voice—and broke it. Her career as a singer was ended. And this was the end of her long, weary struggle!

She did not despair, however, and the manager of a New Orleans theatre was induced to give her a chance to play Lady Macbeth. She played the part, but created no extraordinary sensation. Constant novelty was necessary at New Orleans, and the young tragedienne soon found her occupation gone. She applied to Hamblin, of the Bowery theatre. Her fierce energy and intensity electrified the manager. He engaged her at a salary of twenty-five dollars a week for the first year. She was allowed only four weeks in which to study the parts of her repertoire. Two weeks passed. She incurred a large debt to pay for her wardrobe. Suddenly she was prostrated by fever. Half her time for preparation was gone; but mind asserted its sway over matter. She *would* play, and she did play. Prosperity dawned upon her life, and did not set—for one week. At the end of that time the Bowery suffered the fate which was common to theatres forty years ago, and Miss Cushman's wardrobe vanished in empty smoke.

She was not crushed by this blow. She obtained an engagement at Blake's Theatre, in Albany, and afterward at the Park Theatre, where she played soubrettes and tragic queens according to the will of the powers that were.

Fortune began to smile. In reading Miss Cushman's life, one cannot fail to admire the esprit de corps she manifests when any member of her family is concerned. It was the same with Rachel, the great French actress, but Miss Cushman has nothing in common with that wonderful tragedienne, except her genius and this esprit de corps.

Miss Cushman's sister came upon the stage, and good parts were given her through Charlotte's influence. But another lady, supported by the influence of a New York journalist, had these parts transferred to herself. Charlotte threatened to give up her place, if this transfer were allowed. The journalist then threatened Charlotte; but she secured the assistance of another editor more powerful than the first. This editor wrote a telling article in her favor. That night she appeared as Lady Gay Spanker amid the applause of a crowded house. The two Cushmans could well have cried, with the French soldiers at Orleans, "La victoire est à nous!"

Miss Cushman played with Forrest's rival, Macready, in Philadelphia, New York, Boston and other places—gradually forming a setting of knowledge and experience around the gem of her genius. She played Lady Macbeth, Gertrude in Hamlet, Emilia in Othello, Mrs. Haller in the Stranger, and other characters in great plays.

She went to England. Once there she watched and waited for her opportunity. The London manager, Maddox, proposed that she should play Emilia, in Othello, on Forrest's opening night. She consented on condition that one night should be allowed her before the coming of Forrest. Maddox demurred; the actress insisted. Finally he consented, and she appeared as Bianca. At the end of the fourth act, her triumph was complete. The theatre shook with prolonged bursts of applause. Henceforth the path which led to the heights of fame and fortune was open to her. She forced the world to acknowledge her genius. There was still work before her, but sunlight lay upon it. She had hewn her way out from the dark valley of sickening suspense and disappointed hopes.

Had her courage not been too strong for adverse circumstances, America would not have been able to write her name on the same scroll that holds the names of Rachel, Siddons and Ristori.

CAVALRY SONG.

BY EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

Our good steeds snuff the evening air,
Our pulses with their purpose tingle;
The foemen's fires are twinkling there;
He leaps to hear our sabres jingle!
HALT!
Each carbine send its whizzing ball;
Now cling! clang! forward all,
Into the fight!

Dash on beneath the smoking dome,
Through level lightnings gallop coarse!
One look to Heaven! no thoughts of home;
The guidons that we bear are dearer!
CHARGE!
Cling! clang! forward all!
Heaven help those whose horses fall!
Cut left and right!

They flee before our fierce attack!
They fall, they spread in broken surges!
Now, comrades, bear our wounded back,
And leave the foeman to his dirges!
WHEEL!
The bugles sound the swift recall;
Cling! clang! backward all!
Home, and good-night!

OBSERVATIONS.

BY MAX ADELER.

—We alluded last week to the difficulties which had occurred between the Biggs family and the Briggs family in consequence of the similarity of their names and of their living next door to each other. There has been more trouble since then. Mrs. Biggs lost her cat the other day and she advertised for it, for she was very much attached to it and was exceedingly anxious to recover it. On the day the advertisement appeared there was a ring at Brigge's door-bell at daylight and when Briggs went to the window he found a boy on the step with a cat. The boy said he had found that gray cat that was advertised and he wanted the reward. A violent altercation ensued, during which Briggs affirmed that he hadn't advertised for a cat and any man who had done such a thing was a fool. Then he slammed the window down, and got into bed. Presently the bell rang again. Briggs looked out. It was a man with a cat. He wanted the reward, and said he must have it at once or he would brain the cat on the spot. Briggs, in a towering rage, hurled some frightful epithets at him and returned to bed. The bell rang fifteen or twenty times more during the succeeding half hour, but Briggs only lay in bed and growled. When he arose to dress for breakfast, there were at least fifty men, women and boys on the pavement with cats of all colors and combinations of colors. Briggs leaned out of the window and ordered the crowd to disperse, declaring that the next man who came to his front door with a cat would be shot on the spot. The crowd yelled at him as he closed the sash, and then spattered mud all over the front of the house, after which a dozen or two of them flung their cats over the fence into the yard and left. When the morning paper came Briggs saw Mrs. Biggs's advertisement and understood the cause of the trouble. Before nightfall two hundred and fifty calls were made at the Briggs' mansion by persons who had cats, and about half of them left the cats anyhow when they found that they couldn't gouge the reward out of Briggs. So at supper time cats were roosting by the dozen on the fence, fighting on the kitchen roof, yowling on the grass plat, tearing up and down the yard, and raising a din which was simply frightful to hear. The Biggs' got their cat all right, and they stood at the window and laughed at Briggs, who was running around trying to scare the cats in his yard over into Biggs's yard. Briggs brought in a dog next day and scattered them around the neighborhood, and now he is meditating revenge on Biggs. There will be blood spilled if those two families live near each other much longer.

—We are sorry to learn from an eminent French scientist that several huge chasms recently discovered in the moon indicate that that planet is splitting in pieces. The French gentleman is not quite certain whether the fragments will remain in the heavens and give us a dozen or two additional moons, or whether they will plunge into the earth, break the crust of the globe and let the lava and steam loose from the inside. It is a great pity our French friend cannot give us exact information upon these points. If we are to have a lot more moons the almanac makers ought to know it at once, and some arrangement must be made for having tides fifteen or twenty times a day instead of twice; while if the fragments are going to hit the earth, sufficient warning should be given so that people will have time to put up their umbrellas. A man who is in the way of a piece of falling moon weighing a few billion tons, will be pretty certain to be hurt unless he has his umbrella raised or a spiral spring in his hat with which to bounce the lunar fragment back again. For our part we hope to have the moons stay in the heavens. It will be delightful to have moonlight every night, and sometimes to have three or four moons scooting through the azure vault at once.

—We learn from an exchange that "a young man in Missouri while riding on horseback on Sunday with a gun in his hand accidently shot himself in the lung." There is evidently a very important lesson conveyed by this catastrophe, a lesson which should be laid to heart by every one, and which we hope will be deeply impressed upon the minds of all who hear of the event. We admit at the outset that we do not know precisely what the lesson is. It may be a warning against carrying a gun when pistols and bows and arrows are so cheap; it may be a warning against riding on the back of a horse when there is plenty of room to sit on his head; or it may show the folly of a young man taking his lung along with him when he has a gun, or the danger of carrying his lung in the same hand with his gun. But no matter. It is there—the lesson is—and persons who don't want to be shot through the lung in Missouri on Sunday with a gun, will heed it.

—They have a woman in Toledo, it is said, who cannot speak without rhyming. In all her conversation about the house, even in her orders to her servant-girls, she uses poetry as the vehicle of her orders. The rhyming mania seized her after a severe fit of sickness, and now she cannot get rid of it. The effect of this, when she is attending to the ordinary duties of her household, must often be remarkable. It is, we suppose, something like this:

"It would give me, Matilda, enormous relief,
If you'd cook those potatoes and beans with the beef."

Or this—

"Mary Jane, go right up-stairs and sweep and make my bed,
And do it quickly, too, d' you hear! or else I'll punch yer head."

Or this—

"Yes, Johnny! if you tear your pants,
I'll flog you till I make you dance!"

Or this—

"Alphonso, you are eating now your fifteenth buckwheat cake!
The next thing you'll be bowling with a frightful stomach-ache."

Or this—

"Louisa, put your bustle on and get your woollen shawl,
And come with me to Ferguson's to make a little call;
It makes no difference, my child, what bonnet you may wear,
But for gracious sake, Louisa, take a comb and frizz your hair."

This is all easy enough. But suppose the woman wants to tell the hired girl to bring up the coal scuttle, where is she going to find a word to rhyme with "scuttle?" And if she should have occasion to discuss with her husband such subjects as Ecphysesis and Loxodromics and Seismographicism, how is she going to ring in rhymes on those names? We do not profess to know. We are only certain of one thing; that if the disease becomes common among American women, the men will leave the country.

—They have a little book in China which we are thinking of translating. It is entitled Koo Tawen Oboo, and it is the natural encyclopedia. It consists of 180,000 volumes. We want to get out a pocket edition which will do for a holiday present. It will be a nice thing to send around by the dray-load to a friend, and will furnish much amusement and instruction during the long winter evenings. A man, indeed, may spend more than one evening over it, for the preface alone fills one hundred and ninety-four volumes, and you don't get into the thick of the story before you reach the seventy-five thousandth volume. It is a pleasant book for critics to review. They usually go crazy when they are about one-fourth of the way through.

—One night last winter young Mullen of New Castle, who feared that the lady he loved was entertaining another admirer, determined to climb a tree in the yard from which he could see into the sitting-room in the second story, where the young woman was supposed to be. Just as he got himself fixed in a comfortable position commanding the window, some one upon the inside pulled the curtain down. Then Mullen made up his mind to descend. It was very dark, but just as he began to slide down the trunk, Mullen heard a dog barking furiously beneath, and looking down he saw a huge animal capering about apparently very eager to nip Mr. Mullen's legs. Then Mullen suddenly climbed up the tree again, and endeavored to drive the dog off, but the more he spoke to the brute the more it danced around and barked. Then Mullen came down as low as he dared, and tried to coax the animal, but this only made him hop about and bowl more furiously than ever. So it became apparent that Mullen would have to spend the night in the tree. He fixed himself as comfortably as he could in a crotch of the limbs, and kicked his legs and moved his arms to keep himself from freezing to death. Several times when he thought the dog was asleep he attempted to descend, but each time the brute awoke and began to caper about. By the time daylight arrived Mullen was so benumbed with cold that he could hardly use his hands; but as the sky grew brighter he leaned over to examine his persecutor, and to his amazement he found that it was his own dog, which, unknown to him, had followed him to the tree and had barked and capered only to express its delight at the prospect of Mullen coming down and going home. The suddenness with which Mullen reached the ground is said to have been remarkable, and the language used by him bad. He has some of the rheumatism which he got on that night in his bones yet.

—Jones went out to the Deaf and Dumb Asylum on Thursday to inspect the institution. Upon entering he encountered a man, evidently an inmate, and he at once endeavored to explain to the man by making signs upon his fingers that he wanted to look through the place. The man also made signs which Jones could not comprehend. Then Jones made other and more elaborate motions, which set the man at work with greater violence, and for the next half hour they stood in the hall gesticulating and twisting their fingers without either being able to comprehend what the other meant. Finally, Jones became angry, and in an outburst of wrath exclaimed:

"Oh, get out, you idiot, I'm tired of bothering with you!"

Thereupon the man said, "That's just what I was going to say about you."

"Oh, you can speak, can you? Then why in the thunder didn't you say so and not keep me standing here motioning to you? I thought you were deaf and dumb."

"And I thought you were," said the man.

"I came here to inspect the asylum," said Jones, "and I took you for a patient."

"That's what I came here for, and I thought you were an attendant," said the man.

Here Jones and the man shook hands, and hunted up a genuine attendant and went away happy. After this Jones will always use his tongue first, no matter where he is.

—An exchange says that when a man named Brown undertook the other day to expatiate upon the advantages of building India rubber ships, an old sailor exclaimed, "No, no! It will never do; an India rubber ship would rub out all the lines of latitude and longitude, to say nothing of the equator." Of course this is a joke, but we have always contended that excellent results would follow the use of India rubber for the purpose. Some years ago we explained through the public press that if our war vessels were made of rubber we need spend nothing for powder. Suppose for instance, a vessel sails in front of a Cuban fort, the enemy fires a ball at the ship, the ball strikes the elastic side, rebounds, enters the fort and kills the men. No doubt, under a heavy fire, the vessel could demolish the fort and slay the enemy by hundreds without firing a gun. In cases of collision at sea, too, vessels thus constructed would run into each other and simply bounce back and go ahead unhurt. If such a ship should be thrown upon the shore violently, it would rebound into deep water and get away without hurting anybody, while if one of the sailors tumbled from the mast-head to the deck, he would merely bounce around for a while, and finally settle down as good as ever. There ought to be a law forbidding ships to be made of anything but rubber.

1874. 1874.

OUR OPENING STORIES

FOR

THE NEW YEAR.

We shall begin in the paper of the week after next (No. 21), a fascinating novelet of English life entitled

The Ghost of Norman Park.

OR,

TWO WOMEN WRONGED.

BY MARY ATHERSTONE BIRD;

to be followed by the thrilling romance of Northern and of Tropical life—

THE SEA OF FIRE;

OR,

ON THE BRINK OF A PRECIPICE.

BY MAURICE F. EGAN.

Also, by a new story from the pen of BURR THORNBURY, whose late work, "JESSIE DALE, *The Conductor's Daughter*," excited much interest by its strange plot and striking incidents. His new serial will be entitled

HARD TIMES;

OR,

THE REAL VICTIMS OF THE PANIC.

A TALE OF THE WINTER OF 1873—74.

It is scarcely necessary to state to those acquainted with THE POST, that the best stories of Love, Adventure, and High and Low Life, in this country and in England, etc., to be found in any weekly paper, will appear in our columns during the coming year. Our Letters, Miscellaneous Articles, etc., also will be of the highest character.

A WOMAN'S VOW.

BY MARY E. WOODSON.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TWO AFFAIRS OF HONOR FOR ONE DAY.

It was still early when Templeton bade Violette Worthington good-night, and sauntered forth from the boarding-house of Mrs. Primrose.

Those who have engaged in a season's flirtation "for the pastime of the thing," often find that the pain of the ending will wear, when the little ecstasies have in a measure grown threadbare, and the inevitable farewell must be spoken. Perhaps Templeton's real feelings had been as little enlisted as they well could be under the circumstances; but he knew, on the other hand, that he was loved—loved as only women of Violette Worthington's stamp can love—with blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, against every wish of her own heart, and the experience of the whole world, from the very reason that it is not "first love"—a mawkish sentimentality lavished upon the individual of the opposite sex, whether long, short, dark or fair, Falstaffian or "lean and hungry," like Cassius, who makes eyes at us, and talks the unutterable nonsense just at the proper time in our lives—and because it is given without hope. Lighter fancies she had had, wherein the froth of her nature had all effervesced—mayhap deadening some of its fire into bitter ashes; but the smothered flame fanned by a master hand into life again, burst beyond all control, because she knew that for her there could be "no hope," as we have said.

It is only in a man's early years that he defies every other consideration but his own impulse, and she felt instinctively that Earle Templeton's wife, like Cæsar's, must "not only be innocent, but above suspicion." Hence when she had said good-bye that night, she believed that when his footsteps died away, she should never look upon his face again, unless by the merest chance; and the unquestioning, speechless woe of face and eyes, had wrung his strong nature with a pang he should not soon forget, and he was not in the best of humor with himself or the world generally, when he had passed from her presence into the hushed quiet of the night.

As he reached the little gate a heavy hand was placed upon his shoulder. It was a hand that had in its touch something undisguisedly menacing, and he swung round fiercely.

"Who are you?"

"George Worthington."

"Ah, colonel, coming out from the light, I did not recognize you. Ah, you going down street?"

"Only a few paces with you. You are not a coward as well as a villain, Earle Templeton."

"By heavens, George Worthington, either epithet applied to me, would leave you no option but to try me on the former."

"This is what I had supposed, and therefore I defer settling with you until morning, in the assurance that you will be found. A friend will wait on you at any place you shall appoint, at sunrise."

Templeton's indignation was aroused.

"My chambers adjoin my office."

"So I have been informed."

"Your tone and manner, Colonel Worthington, leave me no room to doubt the nature of that friend's visit," replied Templeton, calmly, so far as any one could have told. "May I, however, presume to inquire into the cause?"

"You may, though I think you might dispense with that, and as I have no time to answer supererogatory questions, I will bid you good-night." And Colonel Worthington turned on his heel and strode away.

"It is this affair with Miss Worthington beyond all doubt," thought Templeton, as he too moved on. The question was useless. And the same doubly-damned villain who has been writing to Juan Alvarez is at the bottom of this. The note which this unfortunate girl received was only a stratagem to throw stronger—nay, irrefutable suspicion around us, and thus bring her brother and myself into collision. By heavens, had it been legal or other matter that I might partly have forgotten, I should not have been able to swear but it was my own writing.

"No wonder Violette was deceived. And yet she should have known me better. Who can it be?" His suspicions naturally adverted at once to Lieutenant Masters, the sickly young man who had once warned him to discontinue his attentions to Miss Worthington.

"He is incapable of the clever counterfeit," he muttered, "but he has money at command, and accomplices could be readily found. What venom the wasp must have too, that he would not only provoke a serious difficulty between the brother and myself, but must endeavor to thwart me elsewhere. Would not he have desired though, that I should succeed with Miss Alvarez? Yet, if Masters be out of the question, who can it possibly be?"

Not once in all his speculations had that terrible vow of vengeance, under the lime-trees at W——, from the white lips of a broken-hearted woman, occurred to him. Whenever the remembrance of Carroll Tressylian came back to him, and when was it that it did not?—there was a thrill of fierce satisfaction that he had done all in human power to avenge him. After the self-destruction of the murderer, some very readable romance articles coupled with the recantation of Jones, had appeared in several papers, declaring that, after all, the affair was involved in inexplicable mystery, and that perhaps the one innocent man had suffered here; but they had made not the slightest impression upon him. And thus, completely in the dark as to who his enemy and traducer could be, he wended his way through the streets of N——, and into a coffee-room in quest of James Barrycourt, whom he must ask to stand by him in the painful affair of to-morrow.

The young barrister, at his solicitation, joined him at a table, where they were to partake of refreshments, when they would adjourn to Templeton's rooms to arrange a little matter of business.

While they sat sipping their coffee, and Barrycourt had taken up a paper—for Templeton was rather more reserved than usual, a second party entered and took the seats just to their left. Templeton looked up and saw Sebastian Alvarez—his companion he did not know.

The Spaniard instantly assumed a smile of withering disdain, as he glanced around; and Templeton, the better to command himself, took up a paper also. He could not however, like his companion, fix his attention upon the print.

"A striking face," he heard the stranger say, in French. "Like those we see in the old Italian paintings. Vandyke redivivus."

"And yet," replied Sebastian Alvarez, slowly, and in a great deal louder tone than he was wont to speak, "it masks as low and lying a nature as you ever read of. The fellow has won some reputation for talent here; and would you think it, he had the unblushing cheek to palm himself off on my father, in his ignorance of this swinish country and its people, as a person of noble connections and expectations; when he comes from a stock of murderers, thieves, and no one knows what. His name is Earle Templeton."

"Consummate liar and puppy," cried Templeton, swinging round like a panther—all the dark, swift passion of his nature now thoroughly aroused—his eyes gleaming like steel, "no man ever couples Earle Templeton's name with so malicious a falsehood, and lives;" and he flung his glove in the other's teeth.

Barrycourt and the stranger had turned in amazement.

"Fabla poco y bien teneste han por alguien,"* said Alvarez, in Spanish, as he rang the bell. "My father employed that fellow in some low business, and I had occasion to warn him that he was inclined to display a temper and an obstinacy which but two classes of beings are ever allowed to indulge in with impunity—a gentleman and a donkey. As he is not a gentleman, you see he must be the donkey. Here, waiter"—as an attendant appeared—"there is a glove, I think. Throw it on the dunghill; and another time be cautious how you put gentlemen into a menagerie," and he prepared to saunter out.

With a sudden movement Templeton rose to his feet, and stood before him—a righteous indignation flushing his face, and fire darting from his eyes.

"Even though Nina Alvarez has promised to become my wife, I cannot submit to coarse drunken insult for the sake of her love. You are her brother; and as such ought to be a gentleman. Deny it as you will—through cowardice, or I know not what—you can not take from me that title. All N—— will corroborate my claims to it. If you refuse to accept my challenge, when you can have no grounds for doing so, I shall try my cane across your shoulders, and then kick you into the street."

"It was not enough for you to lie to my father, but you must lie about my sister," said Alvarez, fiercely, putting his hand to his pocket. "Shall I shoot you like the dog you are?"

"Stop!"

The single word was hissed on the air like a bullet.

"Draw your hand but one inch from your breast, and I shoot you where you stand. Will you give me satisfaction, as a gentleman should?"

"To another gentleman—no."

"Let me tell you of our law. Were you to shoot me here—which I have no intention you shall do, you would be hung for murder; you would not like that. You know well enough, as I said, that I am not only a gentleman, but a gentleman of position. I do not wish to condescend to an eating-house brawl; and you should not."

"You are then ambitious to die as a gentleman?"

"I shall never die otherwise, sir Spaniard."

"Well," replied Alvarez, with still a remarkable show of coolness, "it has been a characteristic of my race to delight in bestowing princely favors. I have half a mind to gratify you."

"Your life will be the forfeit if you do not."

"Eh bien, what brutes these English are. So I must shoot you?"

"Or I you."

"Ah!" he cried, airily. "Monsieur de Balzac, mon ami, you see how we stand. Can I do otherwise?"

"I think not," replied the Frenchman, all alive at the idea of a duel. "I have heard of Monsieur Templeton as un vrai gentilhomme."

"You see how much honor I and my friends are disposed to do you," continued Sebastian, turning toward his adversary. "You see I am preparing to leave England in twenty-four hours. When shall it be?"

"To-morrow at ten," replied Templeton, who had recovered all his composure. "I have an engagement earlier."

"I shall be ready. Where?"

"On the beach where we first met."

"At ten, then, be it. And as I am counted the best shot in Europe, I would advise you to say your prayers to-night." With that he took the arm of Monsieur de Balzac, and strolled out as though he had just transacted the business arrangements for some pleasure excursion.

Templeton likewise soon turned homeward with Barrycourt. The surprise of the latter may be imagined at the double arrangement of his friend.

"Just Heaven!" he cried, "must you twice offer yourself as the victim of so foul a conspiracy? Who is it, in God's name, that has done this devil's work? Were I you, I would turn heaven and earth to discover the author of those letters, and bring him to punishment. I should never have dreamed but that Miss Worthington's visit of yesterday was of her own accord, or at your solicitation."

"Nor would her brother," replied Templeton. "The thought of death is not more inviting to me than to most other men; but I could not have done otherwise. But should I survive and could be possessed of millions in bank, I would cheerfully lose it all, through a forgery, to be able to come up, at last, with the man who can thus imitate my writing, and so stab me in the dark."

He found a servant waiting at his door with a note. Barrycourt noticed that for the first time his hand trembled as he approached the light. The note was in the handwriting of Nina Alvarez, and ran thus:

"If you ever imagined that you had won my regard, pray do not longer indulge such a fancy. Whatever may have existed in the past, henceforth I shall regard you with loathing, and shall avoid you as I would a venomous reptile. To-morrow I hope to leave England, with all its associations of you, far behind me forever.

"NINA ALVAREZ."

Templeton crushed the note in his hand as though it had been a wasp that had stung him, and hurled it into the fire. He passed the greater part of the night in writing and in arranging his papers.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A WOUND IN THE LEFT ARM AND A BLOW ON THE RIGHT.

At sunrise Colonel Worthington's friend, Captain Neeson, presented himself at Earle Templeton's door. James Barrycourt received him with formal courtesy, and the preliminaries were soon arranged.

For the first affair, an open field a mile from town was selected, and at seven o'clock Templeton drove thither in a carriage, accompanied by Barrycourt and a surgeon.

They found Colonel Worthington, with his friends, already on the ground.

"Is there no chance for an accommodation?" asked Barrycourt.

"None," was the determined reply. And the distance was measured off.

Templeton was, as usual, very pale, but not a muscle of his face was seen to move. Colonel Worthington's brows were bent in a severe frown.

The two men were placed opposite each other and the signal arranged.

"One! Two! Three!"

As the last number was pronounced, a simultaneous report rang through the air. The momentary mist broke away, and Colonel Worthington was seen standing erect and composed. Templeton's left arm had fallen to his side, and the blood was flowing from his sleeve. The surgeon hastened to his side.

"You are wounded, Mr. Templeton."

"Yes, but I think not severely. You may stop this blood, however, before we proceed."

He had fired in the air.

The surgeon tore open his sleeve, and hastened to lave and bind up the wound.

"Most men would have fainted under that," he said, stepping back with the other parties.

Captain Neeson now advanced.

"Colonel Worthington warned his adversary not to fire in the air again. He himself would endeavor to take more effective aim than before."

"I shall be ready," answered Templeton, setting his teeth. He had thought in the start that he might honorably escape a difficulty with the brother of Nina Alvarez by death. Now, this man's obstinacy angered him, and again the signal was given.

"One! Two!—"

"Stop! In God's name, stop!"

Every man there looked back in astonishment in the direction from whence the sound had come, and beheld Violette Worthington, as she sprang quickly forward, and placed herself between the combatants.

"Brother!" she cried, with uplifted hands, "shoot me, if you will, I may deserve it; but do not harm one hair of Earle Templeton's head. He has rescued me from the perilous gulf that was yawning before me, and is, in consequence, the preserver of your honor."

"Peace, infatuated girl, and out of my way," exclaimed her brother indignantly, "or you may indeed tempt me to a most unnatural deed. Have you no shame, that you must needs expose yourself here?"

"No shame that could be so great as to make me sacrifice an innocent life to screen it," she answered boldly. "Nay, you shall listen to me. Gentlemen, I appeal to you all to bear. This affair is all a cruel, cruel mistake. I am not here to give an account of my actions—they have been imprudent enough, I dare say; but there is no man living who could have had so great an influence for good over me as the one whose life my brother now is seeking. A woman has only now left me—a strange woman, with a darkly beautiful but revengeful face, who warned me of this engagement, and told me that she had planned it from motives of revenge. It was she who sent me yesterday eve a forged note, which induced me, most thoughtlessly, to seek Mr. Templeton's office; and it was she who informed my brother of it from the same dark motive, that the noise of this scandal might spread abroad and injure Mr. Templeton elsewhere. This I swear, as I hope for mercy in the world to come."

There was not one heart there but throbbed in genuine admiration for the beautiful girl before them.

"And I too can swear to the truth of what she affirms," said James Barrycourt, advancing, "that the note Miss Worthington received, purporting to be from my friend, was a wicked forgery."

Colonel Worthington hung his head in silence.

"Come, gentlemen," said his second, "this affair being rectified, nothing remains to be done but for us to shake hands and separate. Mr. Templeton I am sure has done all that a gentleman could do. And, Colonel, the army will be on the march in an hour."

Colonel Worthington thus appealed to, stepped forward.

"If I have wronged you, Mr. Templeton, I can only pray your forgiveness, and beg of all here, for the sake of this unfortunate girl, that the affair may be hushed as speedily as possible. Violette, come; in your distant home I trust you will remember the lessons Mr. Templeton has so kindly taught you, and for the future be more cautious in your actions."

He drew her arm through his. A single sob broke from her lips as she drew her veil over her face, and turned away. Her brother hastily placed her in the carriage, and, entering himself, gave orders to the driver, and was borne quickly out of sight.

"An heroic, if erring woman," said the doctor, looking after them. "But, Mr. Templeton, come, you must drive quickly home, ere the authorities get wind of the matter. You will need further attention, too, at once." Seeing Templeton to his rooms, he commanded him to seek his bed.

"My friend," said the latter, with one of his icy, impenetrable smiles, "I have another engagement in an hour;" and he briefly narrated his difficulty with the Spaniard.

"Put it off," said the surgeon, coolly. "One wound at a time may, perhaps, be better."

"On the approaching occasion I may inflict one," answered Templeton, frowning darkly.

"Better for that, then, a week from now."

"Impossible, my dear doctor," replied Earle. "The party will leave the country this evening."

More coffee was drank, and a little later he had descended to the street again, and was preparing to enter his carriage, when he felt himself detained, and turning, saw an officer of police at his side.

"What is it?"

"You are under arrest."

"For what?"

It was soon explained. Information had been lodged before the authorities of a contemplated duel between Earle Templeton, barrister-at-law, and some party or parties unknown, and he must appear before the mayor, to be bound over to keep the peace. Secretly goaded both by his fierce temper and the wound he had received, never perhaps did a man of his unflinching notions of honor so long to defy justice, but it was of no avail.

"For God's sake, Barrycourt," he whispered, "see that imperious, insolent foreigner, and explain to him my situation. I should go mad else."

His own knowledge of law and its quibbles could avail him nothing. He was solemnly sworn "to abstain—save under conditions allowed—from attempting to strike, bruise or beat, or to use fire-arms with intent to wound or kill any individual whatsoever, for the space of twelve months," and required to give bond and security for the same.

Worn and worried to no small extent, it was a late hour when he was permitted to quit the town-hall of justice, and turn homeward. "A dark-eyed woman," he repeated, wonderingly, remembering the words of Violette Worthington that morning. "Who, in heaven's name, can she be, and what is her motive?" Lost in vague and remote speculations, he had turned down a quiet street, and was pursuing his way across an open square, when several horsemen were to be seen turning the corner, and making directly toward him. He did not turn aside, for he had scarcely seen them, when one of the party dashed up so close to him, that he lifted his dark eyes sternly, under the impression that the intruder, whoever he might be, had designed him as the object of some drunken prank.

It was Sebastian Alvarez.

"So," he said, "you did turn coward, and set the authorities to interfere. I thought you would repent."

Earle Templeton's voice was the calmer of the two now, but his teeth were set like those of a mastiff.

"And again you lie. I would give half my life to chastise you as you deserve, though once this morning, for her sake, of whom you are so unmindful, I would have spared you."

"You dare still to speak of her," cried the Spaniard, hotly.

"Do not goad a man whose hands are tied," replied Templeton, warningly, "or he may prove to you that he can dare to a still greater extent. Ride on, in God's name. I am in no humor to brook your insolence, nor yet in any condition to resent it."

"Then I obey you," said the Spaniard, rising suddenly in his stirrups, "but I will leave you this to remind you that you have crossed the path of an Alvarez," and his riding-whip, lifted in the air, was descending rapidly, when Templeton turned with the spring of a lion and received the blow across his coat-sleeve. The sting of the lash was scarcely felt, but the insult was so maddening, that there is no doubt but that he would have given the Spaniard a mark he would have borne to his grave, despite the fact that his left hand was powerless, had not Alvarez instantly set spurs to his horse, and thus eluded his clutch. When Templeton recovered his vision, for he was really for the moment blinded by passion, the horsemen were out of sight. "Though he were thrice my own brother, he should die for that!" he hissed, and then he moved on. Any one to have met him ten minutes later would have supposed that he was taking a pleasant stroll, for the mere diversion afforded in a casual survey of the streets and their people.

A few hours later he was down at the wharf amid a crowd of spectators, all waiting to see the steamer "Lady Alice" leave the port. Not one of those idle gazers seemed to be more listless or to have less purpose than he, as he stood looking out on the broad expanse of waters. Men and women, as they passed to and fro, looked at him with curious eyes, noted the proud beauty of his face and form, wondered what could have happened that he wore one arm bandaged across his breast, and turned away to have that countenance haunt them for hours, with vain speculations as to his object there, and his general pursuits in life.

A number of persons embarking for foreign ports had gone on an hour ago, taken the best seats, and made themselves generally comfortable. But there are people who always will be late, and accordingly no one was astonished, even after the first signal-bell had rung from the "Lady Alice," to see several cabs dash up to the wharf, and the men pitch themselves frantically out, and begin to snatch babies, band-boxes and women pell-mell after them. It was rather a good thing to the smiling spectators.

There was one carriage, however, embossed with a flaming coat of arms, with driver and footman in livery for whom there was no smile. The few persons between them and the water's edge made haste to get out of the way, while those at a safe distance craned their necks and looked eagerly to catch but one glimpse of these distinguished personages. A young man sprang first to the pave. He might be a prince of the blood for aught they knew—he was so handsomely dressed, and bore himself so proudly. Then an older man—evidently the father of the first, and lastly a graceful, veiled lady. The young lady and the old gentleman passed quickly into the boat; the young man remaining to look after the baggage. While he stood hastily giving directions, some one touched him on the arm.

"A word before you leave."

He swung round quickly and beheld Earle Templeton placid and smiling at his side.

The young man referred to was, of course, Sebastian Alvarez.

"What would you now?"

"I am bound by a pledge, and my word is my bond, or I should throw you headlong into the sea. In one year, however, I shall be free; and at the end of that time I shall find you, though you were at the antipodes."

"In the heat of passion this morning I did you a wrong. You have some bull-dog courage, but you were bound, and I was sorry afterward. Now I promise you, that though at the antipodes indeed I will turn eagerly back to meet you. Will that suffice?"

"In part. To-day is Friday—the third of May."

"Well?"

"On Saturday, the third of May, in the coming year, we must meet."

"Where?"

"That is for you to say."

"By the code of honor—no."

"Then I will appoint. I shall be in Paris. You will be there also, and my address through the post office will reach you?"

"Yes."

"Then at twelve o'clock I shall be free. At one I shall expect your friend."

"If I am living you shall not be disappointed. There is my card." He handed him a bit of pearl paper emblazoned with gilt letters, from a jeweled card-case, and turning quickly, hurried over the pontoon to the vessel.

No one had observed this brief dialogue, or would have dreamed, from the countenance of either, that they had not parted on the most amicable terms.

CHAPTER XXX.

GEORGE CHESTER'S FRIENDS.

Dr. Chester had not forgotten all the duties of life, when it seemed to him that every pleasure was dead. The night that Lilian Thornton's note had come, telling him of her marriage with another, and that other Lewis Hartman, whom he had every reason to mistrust and despise, he had indeed abandoned himself to a grief that had alarmed the other members of the household for his sake. But in the morning he had risen up calm and patient, and resolved to rescue her still, though it should be the last act of his life.

"He has deceived her," he said over and over again, "and even in her state of mind she would abhor him if she knew all, and would come back to us."

He had no thought of her, as the old love, from that day till the end of his life. He was persuaded that her reason had been subverted, and that she was the victim of a wicked conspiracy from beginning to end. The villain who had enticed her from her friends would soon weary of her, and might become cruel, even brutal in his treatment of her. His only hope was to rescue her if in danger, and restore her to those whose natural affections could be trusted.

He had had a long interview with Mrs. Thornton, and she had at last emerged from her room, her face flushed and strangely excited, and had thrown her arms about Mary's neck in a passion of weeping, and the tears had seemed to spring from a source of sincere congratulation. The one maid-servant who came every morning, looking in just then, withdrew unobserved.

She was very certain "that the doctor and Miss Mary were going to make a match now."

Mrs. Thornton, the elder, had weepingly communicated to Dr. Chester some circumstances that had given him an insight into Lilian's motives of action, convincing him more than ever that she had not been entirely sane since her brother's death; and with this clue he had secretly set to work.

Several circumstances, however, had conspired to delay him fatally. One was that old Mrs. Thornton had been suddenly seized with a dangerous epidemic, and from the first had manifested symptoms of an aggravated kind. Abandoning every other patient, he had watched at her side night and day, with the briefest intervals of rest, for four long weeks.

At the end of that time she died.

A few days later Mary Thornton had left his house, to return in a short time—the people said as his wife; but she did not come back at all. When questioned, he answered simply that she would make her home for the future with some friends at a distance.

And now he was entirely alone. He had never, however, for one moment forgotten Lilian Thornton.

Sometimes—though he, too, could have no great fancy for Earle Templeton, he had dropped into the office of the latter, on one pretext or another; but he had been chilled by the reserve of the lawyer, and believing that it would be impossible for him to discover anything there, he had discontinued his visits. The last time he had gone away, Lewis Hartman had looked down upon him from the steps above, whither he had gone to fetch away the troublesome old vagrant, calling herself Mrs. North.

Had Dr. Chester stood beside Earle Templeton at the wharf on the evening the Lady Alice had sailed, he might have seen Lewis Hartman, Lilian and Mrs. North, now entirely sober, and really bearing herself in a handsome outfit like some old dowager, taking passage for foreign parts; but Dr. Chester was at the bedside of a patient.

On the day of Mrs. Thornton's burial he had been summoned by a lad to visit the daughter of a poor widow, who had been smitten with the same malarious fever.

The widow's name had been given as Mrs. Weston.

He found her with a family of five children in two small garret rooms, cleanly swept and dusted, but destitute of all furniture except two straw beds, an unvarnished pine table, and three old chairs.

"We had sold what we could to buy medicine, hoping to keep down the fever from the start, but they are so ill we were bound to send for you," said the woman, apologetically. She wanted him to understand from the beginning that he could have no hope of being paid for his services.

There were three girls and one little boy down with the fever—the oldest son alone had been left to aid the mother, and had been sent for him.

Dr. Chester took up the little flushed hands as tenderly as he would have done, had they been adorned with the costliest jewels; and when he had carefully noted the symptoms of each he went away, taking the boy with him, and sent back medicines from his office.

His attentions were unremitted; but he had been called too late. The two girls whom he had found in greatest danger—they were the younger—died in an hour of each other. The mother was wild with grief. She threw herself down, tearing her hair, beside their lifeless bodies.

"In the agony of this hour I invoke Heaven's curses on Lewis Hartman, the remorseless thief who defrauded us of all and turned us into the world to starve," she cried. "I knew how it would be. I told that marble-faced, marble-hearted Earle Templeton how it must end; but all the lawyers in the world have not half the soul of this one physician. Oh, doctor, save Lucile, she was her father's darling."

This was the oldest daughter.

"With God's help she shall be spared to you," answered Dr. Chester, softly.

Lucile began slowly to recover.

George Chester did not forget that she had mentioned the name of Lewis Hartman with the bitterness of hate; and when proper opportunity afforded, he drew from Mrs. Weston her story.

"His whole life has been one piece of lying hypocrisy and rascality," the doctor answered. "I, too, know the man, and should I overtake him in this world, as something tells me I shall, rest assured he shall be brought to that punishment which his crimes deserve, as there is justice in Heaven."

"You believe, then, that there is?" said the woman. "My own sufferings have been so great that I have grown skeptical."

"My path through life has not been rose-strewn," answered the doctor, evenly; "but I have never had a doubt."

The strong heart and brave life had proved this.

Lucile was an interesting child. She was ten years of age. She knew what this good doctor had done for them; and when she was quite well, she did not forget him. Often when he came back to his room of evenings he would find a fresh rose in the little earthen flower-pot her own hands had placed upon the mantel. He valued this cheap, unsightly toy far more than if it had been of rarest Bohemian workmanship. The wealthy of their abundance might have given and forgot, but this proved to him that he was still tenderly remembered by grateful hearts. It was the one link that now bound him to the social world.

The spring passed away, however, and with it the flowers. The little girl came no more. At first he missed these mute evidences of her presence; but after a little he had ceased to remember them. He had, nevertheless, sent Lucile to a school, and secured the oldest boy a place in a printing office. The youngest was still delicate. Mrs. Weston took in sewing from a tailor.

The autumn, with its sad remembrances, came again, and autumn sickened into bleak, desolate winter. On the 24th of December, Dr. Chester for once seemed cast down and even moody. He returned to his room at an early hour, complained of a headache, and determined not to go out again unless in a case of absolute necessity.

Sitting with his elbows upon the table, his brow clouded with thought, he heard a knock at his door with positive regret. It was bitterly cold out of doors, and had commenced to snow.

In response to his invitation, not given in his usual cheerful tone, a little girl entered and greeted him blushingly. She was plainly clad, and the mantle about her shoulders was white with the falling snow. At first he did not recognize her; but she looked up at him and smiled—he had not forgotten that. It was Lucile Weston.

He held out his hand kindly. It had been a good many months since he had seen her, and in the meantime she had changed much. Her cheeks had filled out, and the roses had come back to them; but there was still the same open and straightforward look—the same mouth, rippling with dimples at every word, as though to claim his sympathy—the same voice, expressive of a half-timid, yet undisguised affection.

He took her to the hearth, brushed off the snow from her cape and hood, and placed her in a chair that was nearest the fire. She was not a bit cold. Her tender child's heart had kept her warm.

No one was sick. She had only come to bring him a little Christmas present from mamma and herself. Child-like, she exhibited her own gift first, because her heart had been most set upon that. She drew from beneath her cloak another larger pot, with a little fragrant geranium.

"I was almost afraid to bring it out this evening," she faltered, with pretty blushes, "it was so cold; but I did not let the air get to it, and I thought how bright it would look just here, you see, by your window." And with her little numb fingers she got down and placed it on a ledge just beyond the Venetian blind.

Dr. Chester raised the flower tenderly to his lips.

"Where did you get this, little one?"

"Oh, a long time ago a little girl at the school had one just as large as this, and when I helped her with her lessons, she gave me a tiny sprig. I planted it myself. It belonged entirely to me, and I said I would raise it for you. Once I thought it would die, and I cried over it so much, mamma said my tears had revived it. It came out again then, and now it is yours."

"My own tears shall freshen it should it wither again, Lucile," he replied, softly. "I shall watch it with care. You could not have given me anything that I would prize so much."

The child was richly repaid. She then gave her mother's present. A pair of slippers, richly embroidered on velvet, and lined with fur. No cordonnier de Paris had ever wrought a more finished piece of workmanship, yet the woman had made them of some scraps the tailor had given her. It was a handsome present, but he valued the child's flower more highly. He made Lucile sit down beside him, and began to question her with a light heart.

Her replies at first were brief, but very soon the tables were turned, and it was his part of the dialogue to interrupt her with short parentheses. She was fast learning to help her mother of evenings. Edward still worked with the printer, and they would do very well if it were not for their clothes, which would wear out, and their appetites, which never failed. Then, too, there were lights and wood that cost so much. The old fireplace in their rooms was so large that a nice fire like his would scarcely make any more show in it than a match.

* Speak little and well, and people will mistake you for somebody.

As the child rattled on, George Chester felt his headache and his low spirits both vanishing. When she arose to go, he went out with her, and saw her home. Then he turned away; and stopping at a wood-yard ordered a cart-load of large fagots to be taken to the child's mother. At a later hour he himself drove up, and paid them a visit. He soon, however, sent the children off into the spare room, while he and the mother remained behind.

He had asked them not to interrupt him, and he felt sure that Lucile could be relied on; the boys might be more curious, so he hastened to have a beautiful Christmas tree, bearing presents for each, brought up, and placed in the best light of the lamp upon the table. He added fagots to the fire until there was a great roaring blaze; and then he slipped out to send the children back. They arose quickly, prattling all the while, pushed open their mother's door to go in, and stopped in breathless astonishment.

At sight of the glowing fire and the beautiful evergreen glittering with bon-bons and toys, they drew back half-frightened, expecting to behold Santa Claus face to face. Dr. Chester, however, is standing behind them—and in a moment Lucile comprehends all. The three rush in and are half-frantic with ecstasies and thanks.

Besides the confections, that will last them for a week, there are clothes for each of them, and a nice warm shawl for mamma. But this is not all—a strange servant comes in, after they have danced around each article until they are tired, bearing a tray upon his head. The table is pulled up, and an abundant and savory repast spread before them. They all sit down and eat, Dr. Chester in the midst, and are a truly happy group. The mother forgets her sorrows, and joins in the merriment of the little ones.

The evening had passed quickly and pleasantly; and at a late hour, Dr. Chester turned homeward with a full heart. There was only one bitter thought recurring, in the midst of his pure enjoyment; Mrs. Weston had asked him if he had ever heard anything of Lewis Hartman, and he had been forced to answer no.

He was to-day as ignorant of the whereabouts of Lilian Thornton, as he had been on that first morning of her departure, when he had still fancied her in the room but a few feet from his own.

Hartman had seen the notice of Mrs. Thornton's illness, which had been published by Dr. Chester, in the vain hope that through such means Lilian might be brought back. The former had carefully kept the papers out of her sight. He had shown her the one containing the notice of her mother's death.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ANOTHER VISIT TO COLDHAM.

Earle Templeton was startled out of the hum-drum round of his professional duties one chill autumn morning, by the unwelcome apparition of Mr. Horace Eglinston in his doorway.

He had seen Mr. Eglinston but once or twice since that memorable day in the beginning of this story, when the latter had solemnly sold his beautiful daughter before the altar of God, to Carroll Treasylian for gold; and then only when a meeting could not possibly be avoided.

If there could be one thing above all others lacerating to Earle Templeton's proud nature, it had always been to have his personal feelings probed, his personal matters touched by any other—no matter how congenial, in the general sense of the term, that other might be; but to be read, and perhaps pitied by the man before him—the man who had remorselessly blighted his life, and for whom he must ever have an undying contempt, even after all hatred had perished—was more than he had been able to bear. And hence, though he would scarce have been willing to confess it to himself, Mr. Eglinston, with the soft whine in his voice, and the slippery polish of his manners, was the only man living whom he carefully and persistently avoided. It may then at once be imagined, that to the hero of this story, the visitor thus intruding was by no means a welcome one.

"Pray excuse this intrusion, Mr. Templeton," he began at once, as he seated himself in the chair to which the other had motioned with his hand, "but really I could not do otherwise than come to you. You know that I took my daughter abroad after that most barbarous murder of her husband, and that I have done everything possible for her comfort and happiness."

He, the miserable, lying hypocrite!

The muscles of the usually inflexible mouth before him gave a slight twitch, but the speaker did not change in look or voice.

"Well, Mr. Templeton, she—I mean Floy, of course—has never recovered from the shock; and I have now no hope that she ever will. I am sure that her physicians pronounce her worse than she really is; but last night she was a great deal worse than she has ever been, and they declared her very ill. In fact, my darling child imagines that she is dying, and she has sent me to implore you to come to her for a few moments before she leaves the cares of this world behind her forever," and Mr. Eglinston wiped his eyes on his kerchief of soft white silk.

"Where is she?" asked Earle Templeton, in a low voice.

"At Coldham!" he answered, pettishly. "Of all places in the world the one that must affect her worst. It is only very recently—I am afraid since they have had no hope—that her physicians would consent to bring her there; she—she has sent you this," and he handed Templeton, as it at first appeared, an empty sealed envelope. The latter tore it open, and found a bit of paper with these words traced upon it in an almost illegible hand:

"I have only a few hours to live or I could not send for you even now; but in death I have always promised myself that you would see me again. You will not deny me this, I know. Come at once, or you will be too late, and I shall go to my grave, feeling that you have been more unkind than I ever could have been to you. FLORENCE."

When Templeton looked up, Mr. Eglinston had averted his face. The former took out his watch.

"We shall barely be in time for the train," he said. "Come."

He did not speak again on the journey, unless in answer to some question, and then his responses were in monosyllables.

The old depot at Coldham—the old walk up to the grand house to which Ralph Thornton had gone in the unclouded freshness of his bright manhood rather more than a year previous—and again the dead leaves whirled and danced at Earle Templeton's feet as they had done at his—through the dark-vaulted entrance, up the softly-carpeted stairway, into a dimly-lighted chamber—her chamber. And the woman lay there to whom he had given all the idolatrous love of his young manhood.

"Earle!"

The face was pale with the dews of death; but the voice, even now, had all the old, soft winning music of her girlish days; and it smote him to the heart.

"Earle!" she murmured again. "Ah! you are here! I knew you would come. Papa—dear, will you leave the room, and take them all out? I want to talk to him alone—just a few moments, you know. There can be nothing wrong in that now."

Oh, no! nothing wrong now or evermore.

The hard, worldly heart of the old man was melted now, and he went out with a choking sob, beckoning the attendants to follow.

"Oh! speak to me, Earle," faltered the dying woman. "There is such a short time left to me now. Let me but hear you call my name—as you used to do?"

He stood with folded arms, looking down at her. The stern armor which he had put on had not yet been pierced, even by the sword of Death before him.

"That is changed, too, Mrs. Treasylian," he said.

Even in her great weakness she lifted the little waxen hands depreeatingly.

"Do not—ah, do not call me that. Let me be the Florence of old—your Florence, for the one hour of life that is left to me."

"The Florence of old!" he repeated, bitterly. "How can you ask that, when you know that she died to me forever more than a year ago in the church at N——?"

"Would to Heaven she had died to all the world in very truth before that day," she wailed. "Oh, Earle Templeton, you have been free—you could not suffer as I have done."

"You left me of your own free will and accord," he cried out, bitterly. "You deceived as true a man as ever lived—you embittered my manhood and blighted my whole life. What more would you ask?"

"Your pity," she replied. "Oh, Earle, it was not of my own accord. I was young and thoughtless then, but I have loved you always. My life has been a cruel mistake. I knew that even at the altar, when I looked up and beheld you for one instant, where you had come to see me married. I knew it more bitterly every hour of my life afterwards. He was so true and tender and noble, too, Earle, that it made existence a crucifixion for me. Do you remember that day you came here with his friends after—after we had come back, because you were too proud to stay away? I thought I should go mad when I first beheld you. You talked so grandly, so brilliantly at dinner, that all were amazed; but I saw that you, too, had suffered."

"My God, spare me!" he cried, in agonized remembrance.

"Nay," she pleaded, "hear me still. All my life then was a stupendous, mocking lie. Do you think the wealth lavished upon me could have been anything but an aggravation? Strive to hide it as they would, they who had persuaded me to it saw, when too late, that it was only that. But we will not blame them now. Let all the fault be mine, for I have bitterly atoned. Darling, do not turn away—let me say that once to you—you who have suffered so much. You spoke to me so harshly that day, but it only showed me more than ever what a hero—a king amongst men—you were."

"Hush! oh, God, hush!" It was his turn to plead now. "If you had but dreamed how I longed—" Again he broke off, unable to proceed.

"Longed for what?" she asked, eagerly. "My soul hungers for one kind word from your lips. Tell it me, darling."

"How I longed, then and there, false though you had been, to clasp you in my arms, and let them find us thus in my mad joy, and slay us both," he cried, hoarsely; and then his bowed head went down on the bed-clothes, and his frame shook with the strong man's passionate weeping.

Oh, not dead to him yet—not dead to him yet! as he knew now, was this pale, beautiful woman, over whom the shadows of the end were falling fast.

"I am so glad to hear you say that!" she went on after a little, putting up one delicate weak hand to stroke his dark curls. "It is dreadfully wicked, I know, but I can't help it, and there is so little time for us to be together now."

"So little time!" he repeated imperiously, lifting his head with the old proud gesture, as though his simple fiat could command Life or Death. "My Florence! my soul's idol! you are free now, and we will never part. You are pale, darling, but my kisses will bring the color back to your cheeks."

"And yet, Earle, do you remember that we have never kissed each other?" she said, while a faint flush came back even now to her face, and gave her all the old girlish beauty. "Nay, not now," she continued, while the tender hand was laid on his lips this time. "It was my fault, dear, I sent you away, you know, and you would not be here now, but that the end is so near."

"What end, my beloved?" he still asked, incredulously, for he loved her once more, and in that love he was forgetting that she had ever been the wife of another.

"Death!"

"No, no," he cried. "Fate shall not snatch you from me now. We have both passed through a fiery ordeal, and in it the dross of our natures has all been consumed. And with our affections strengthened ten-fold, how pure will we be in our joys! how blissful in a supreme content of which the envious world shall seek to deprive us in vain!"

"Hush, darling! That is so much like your old, boyish, impetuous self. It is indeed all over with me, Earle, or I shouldn't have you here even now. I owed that much to my husband, and I was determined to pay it all, since I could not give him even a corner of my heart. After his cruel, cruel death. I used to wonder sometimes whether if we were to meet again, you would come back to me. I knew I loved you, but I should have sent you away still. I swore that at his disappearance, and I would have kept my vow at any cost to us both. But you would not have come back to me, Earle, would you?"

"If I had seen you in health, never," he answered, earnestly, "though you had come to me on your knees every day for the rest of our lives. Now, my own, your pale, sick face conquers me, and I shudder to think what I might have lost through my old, accursed obstinacy."

"Lost either way, Earle," she answered, "though you can never know how glad I am that it is as it is. We may not be too happy here, and indulgences like this are only granted to dying people."

"Oh, my darling! don't talk like that. You wounded my heart cruelly once. You will break it beyond all power of mending now," he answered, passionately. "You cannot die. I would give my life to have you, but for one day."

"Hush, dear enthusiast. I used to call you that, you know," she faltered, her voice growing every moment weaker. "Now listen, Earle; there is scarcely time, and while I have the strength, I have a solemn charge to lay upon you. I have a little daughter four months old now. I see you start, you were thinking of me as the Florence Eglinston of our happier days—well, I can scarcely realize it any more than you, for the doctors have kept it from me nearly all the while, because I was so weak. Now, Earle, it seems like a cruel thing for a dying child to say of a parent, but I do not want my father to bring her up. We know how all feeling would be blunted, and how worldly he would make her. I have told him so in all kindness, though I hope my sad fate may soften his heart. So, Earle, I have left it in writing, and he knows it, that I want you to have entire control of her, from the day she is six years old. You must bring her up, and have her educated, and let her live with you then, until you can conscientiously give her to some true man who loves her, and whom she loves. You will promise me this, Earle?"

"Oh, Florence, yes!"

"He would have wished it so, I know," she went on, fainter and fainter. "He used to talk so much about you, Earle, without dreaming how every word found an echo in my heart. I am so glad he never guessed. He was your best friend."

"I know. Oh, God! I know."

"Then you will promise me again to watch over his child; to rear it very tenderly?"

"I promise," he still sobbed, for his strong nature was the weaker of the two now, "and may Heaven judge me as I shall endeavor to perform my duty faithfully; but I would to God, Florence, that I were dying with you!"

"Hush. Don't say that. What would become of her? Besides, you are still young and strong. There is a long life before you with plenty of work to do, and great glory for you to win. And, who knows? you may then love some pretty and good woman, who will be far worthier of you than I could ever have been."

"Oh, Florence! there never could be another like you were, my darling! my darling!"

"It is so good in you to say so, Earle; but women pass you every day, dear, in the streets of our native town, fairer and better—oh, much better than I!"

"I never see them," he answered truthfully. "They have no beauty for me, because they are not you."

Oh, wonderful, divine mystery of love!

"Well," after a pause, "it is only for a time, dear. You can come to me then. I am sure that our Saviour has seen and freely forgiven all. Promise me that you will try to come."

"Florence, I have been fearfully wicked sometimes; too wicked I fear ever to get to Heaven. If I should try, darling, it would only be for you."

"Raise me just a little then. Ah, so! Now say the Lord's Prayer with me, Earle."

The gray shadows were creeping over her. He saw that she was drifting rapidly away from him, out into the dark waters of death, where he could not go, and he caught her frantically to his breast, as though his love must keep her back. His arms were clasped about her wasted form, and with his face pressed to hers, he went through the prayer they had each been taught from their infancy to say apart, but never until now together. When it was ended they each lay for a moment still as though death had claimed both. She was the first to speak.

"Now sit by me, Earle, and lift me a little in your arms. Ah, so! but I am drifting, drifting away." And then her eyes closed as though she were falling asleep. He bent his face to hers and whispered—

"Florence!"

It would seem as though his voice had power to call her back from the very portals of death. The brown eyes, so beautiful yet, unclosed, and the ghost of a smile played upon her lips.

"It is not Mrs.—that other name, now," she said.

"No, darling. It is no treason to him at this hour. You were his in life, but you are mine in death. Call me 'husband,' only once before you go."

"Husband," she whispered, the smile deepening into an irradiation. "Yes, my husband in spirit and in truth, though our communion has been but of souls. Now kiss me, Earle, only once, and let me fall asleep upon your breast."

And, God help us! so they found her, half an hour afterward, when the other watchers, alarmed at the unbroken silence, came back into the room.

She had "fallen asleep upon his breast."

(To be continued in our next. Commenced in No. 16.)

The Story of the Alice Waltz.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD.

Sensations were something like angel visits in St. John's—very few and far between. Sometimes a breeze blew in from the great outside world and made a little ripple on the surface of society, and people went about for a few days, talking of the matter which had stirred them up a little from their usual repose. I think that last word is the proper one to use in this connection. The St. Johnites prided themselves on their Sleepy-Hollow way of living, and to use a stronger term than the one I have, would be sure to bring down upon me the indignation of the worthy people of that pretty place. Sometimes an event occurred among themselves which furnished food for chat and gossip for several days, and then life went on as it had been going before the little social whirlwind came to set the atmosphere of St. John society in brisker motion than usual.

St. John's had a new sensation when old Mr. Gray suddenly resigned his position as organist in St. John's church. He had occupied his position there for many years, and people had come to regard him as a fixture, so to speak. Accordingly, when he announced that he was going away from St. John's, and that the trustees of the church had better be looking about for some one to fill his place, people wondered somewhat as to what his motive could be in leaving them, and more as to who would be secured as his successor.

It was understood after a little while that a new organist had been engaged. A young man from the city, who was fitting himself for a teacher in some musical establishment, the trustees said, in answer to the questions propounded to them.

Of course there was a great flutter among the young ladies of St. John's. A handsome young organist would be a decided acquisition, everybody declared. Of course he was handsome. It would not be according to the eternal fitness of things if he wasn't.

The pretty little church was crowded on the first Sunday of his appearance. Alice Cramer, as she stood before her glass that morning, getting ready for church, had thought of the new organist, and put a spray of white roses and half-opened buds among her soft, wavy brown hair. She sang in the choir, and, if he should be as handsome as Letty Thrope, who sang alto, had declared he ought to be, she wanted to look her best.

The new organist was there when she entered the organ-loft. Alice gave him a quick glance, as she took her place beside Letty, and saw that he was not handsome in the general acceptation of the term. But he had beautiful eyes, she concluded, as he lifted them to hers for a moment, and they made up fully for the beauty his features might lack.

"He isn't the least bit like what I expected," whispered Letty. "Not the very least; but I think he's nice-looking after all, don't you?"

"Yes, quite," answered Alice, and then Mr. Green, who sang tenor, introduced her to Mr. Leith, presenting her as "the best soprano in St. John's." Of course, being a modest young lady, Alice blushed, and the new organist gave her a very earnest glance of admiration; which was no more than many of the St. John's young men had done, for Alice was one of the stars of St. John's aristocracy, and a face like hers was sure to call forth admiration wherever it was seen. A true, pure face it was, with a clear beauty in it, like a star's.

The church was filling rapidly, and the organist began a voluntary. A ripple of pleased surprise ran over the congregation as he struck the opening chords. It was very different from Mr. Gray's playing. There was something about it that indicated a thorough comprehension of what he was doing, and that he had put himself into the spirit which the piece demanded to be rendered properly. The old organ seemed suddenly to have shaken off its drowsiness and renewed its youth. The rich, full, mellow harmonies filled the church and soared heavenward on the air of that still, beautiful morning, as if they were the voices of angels praising God.

"Isn't it just splendid," whispered Letty, in a flutter of pleasure. "Don't you think it is, Alice?"

"It is very beautiful," answered Alice, softly. The grand, full chords seemed in perfect harmony with the peace that was in her heart that morning.

Mr. Leith's first Sabbath as organist of St. John's church was very successful in winning him the favor of the congregation. His style was so far superior to Mr. Gray's that the more aristocratic portion wondered how they could have been content with that worthy gentleman's indifferent accomplishments. The trustees shook hands together, and congratulated themselves on their good luck in securing so satisfactory a person, at the church door, when services were over; and other members of the congregation whispered together about the music, and cast back glances at the organ-loft as they lingered in the aisles while the closing piece was being played.

"I shall be pleased to have you call," Alice said, as she left the church with Letty. "The St. Johnites are quite a musical people, Mr. Leith, and I trust we shall be able to make your stay among us a pleasant one."

"Thank you," he answered, "I have no doubt of it. I shall accept your invitation to call, as I want to get acquainted with the people as soon as possible. It seems like being at sea, or in a desert when one is in a place where he knows no one well enough to call him his friend."

"I understand you," she answered. "Let me see—Tuesday—Wednesday. Can you come to tea Wednesday evening? I will have a few young people there, and will promise to get you acquainted with them."

"I will come, and thank you," he said, smiling. Alice thought him handsome when he smiled. It transfigured his plain face.

And Wednesday evening a very pleasant little circle gathered at Mr. Cramer's, and after tea there was some very good music in the parlor. Mr. Leith played the piano beautifully. As he struck the closing measure of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, a new idea occurred to Alice. She had not kept up her music of late and was getting considerably out of practice in consequence. What she needed was a teacher who could see where her difficulties came in, and who could help her in avoiding the many musical shoals and quicksands which beset the student. Why couldn't she get Mr. Leith to help her?

And acting up to her usual standard of promptness, Alice asked Mr. Leith about the matter that very evening.

He would be glad to give her lessons, he said. Indeed, he was intending to form a class in St. John. He wanted his time fully occupied. So it was settled that he was to come twice a week all through the summer.

The next Monday the lessons began. The hour or two at the piano seemed very short, very pleasant to Alice. With Mr. Leith for a teacher the study of music suddenly acquired new beauty and lost all the old-time unpleasantness. There was no drudgery about it now.

Mr. Cramer looked in upon them once in awhile, but never to stay long. He cared but little for music, and was never very social, and so Alice and Mr. Leith were left alone together most of the time.

In that summer the dream of Alice Cramer's life came to her. There are times in the lives of all when the one grand dream of loving comes to us; the sweetest, best dream of all the dreams we ever know, and some of us wake to a beautiful reality, and some of us to a bitter sense of loss and disappointment.

Alice had never loved any man. She had had an ideal, and her heart had kept itself for his coming. When Leith came, she felt a restfulness she had not known before. She was content. Sometimes she wondered why it was that the old vague restlessness was gone from her. But when he told her that he loved her, she knew all. It was the peace of love that had come to still the longings and the restlessness of a heart which yearns for something it has never known.

I think Leith loved her from the first. He saw in her a woman with a sweet and womanly soul, with a tender and trusting heart, and he felt that it would be safe for any man to give his happiness into her keeping. She would never betray the trust.

The summer days went by, and in their coming and their going, these two learned the most beautiful lesson of life from the great and universal teacher we call Love.

One day he brought her a piece of music in manuscript.

"I have been trying my hand at composing," he said, as he unrolled the sheets, and placed them on the piano.

"The Alice Waltz," she read, as she stood beside him. "Did you name it for me?"

"Yes, I named it for you," he answered, smiling up into her face. "And I wrote it for you; listen."

He began playing. It was a tender, passionate poem in melody; it seemed to Alice, as she listened, that a thought ran through it from beginning to end, and that thought was—"I love you! I love you!" and it sung itself over and over in the slow, sweet measures of the melody. It seemed to her as if his soul was speaking to her through it.

"Do you like it?" he asked, as the last low chord died into silence.

"Oh, so much!" she answered. "It is very beautiful;" and her face was bright and her eyes were tender. "I thank you more than I can tell for it. You must teach it to me."

"Alice!" he rose suddenly from the piano, and took her hands in his. Her heart fluttered like a bird's. It told her what was coming.

"Alice, my darling, has the waltz told you what I tried to make it?" His voice was low and tender, and his face was transfigured by that sweet, grave smile of his. "Did you understand it, Alice?"

"I think I did," she answered softly, and lifted her eyes shyly to his for a moment.

"And may I hope?" His face and voice were full of eagerness. "Do you love me, Alice?"

For answer she gave him a smile that told him what no words could have done, a glad, bright smile that was only a reflection from the sunshine in her heart, and he understood her.

"God bless you, darling," he said tenderly, and kissed her.

When Leith stood before Mr. Cramer and told him that he loved his daughter, the old man heard him through in silence, but his face was purple with passion.

"And I am to understand, sir," he said, when Leith had done, "that you have the presumption, the impudence, sir, to ask my consent to your marriage with my daughter?"

"I love your daughter," Leith answered proudly, stung by the old man's words. "I am not aware that there is either presumption or impudence in my telling you so."

"And my answer is just this," cried the old man, in a sudden burst of rage and anger. "If you don't leave my house immediately, I'll have you put out of it! Do you hear, sir? And if you ever dare to speak to Alice again, I'll horsewhip you, sir, like a dog. Do you know what you are, sir? Merely a fortune-hunter, an adventurer! Don't say a word"—as Leith attempted to speak—"I won't listen to you. Be so kind as to go, Mr. Leith, and be sure you never darken my doors again."

Leith turned away with a white, set face, and left the room without a word.

He found Alice in the parlor.

"It is all over," he said. "Your father ordered me out of the house, and called me a fortune-hunter, and threatened to horsewhip me if ever I spoke to you again." The young man's face was pale with passion.

"Oh, Robert, Robert!" she cried, faint and sick. "And this is the end of it all, and I loved you so."

"This is the end of it all, unless—" He stopped suddenly. "I have no right to ask you to leave your father," he added, presently. "We can wait, darling."

"But he will never change his mind," she answered. "I know him too well for that. His will is the only law he knows. Oh, Robert, Robert!"

She leaned her head upon his shoulder, and wept bitterly. The dream had come to an end; and it had been so sweet to dream! He put his arms about her as if to keep her. God knows it was hard to let her go.

There was a step at the door, and they looked up to see her father there. His face was livid with rage as he saw them.

"Alice," he cried hoarsely, "leave the room. I forbid you to speak to him again. Do you hear? If you do I will turn you from my doors. Remember that. And you, sir! you!—"

He fairly choked with passion, and could not go on.

"I am going," answered Leith, as he bent and kissed Alice for the last time.

"God bless you, darling," he whispered, "I will never forget you;" and then he unclasped her arms from his neck, and went out like one walking in a dream. He never looked at the passion-purpled face in the door as he passed it. He saw only the face of his lost love, white with pain and wet with tears.

St. John's had another sensation, when it was known that the new organist had suddenly resigned his position and gone away. No reason was assigned for the change in his plans. He had been expected to stay for a year, and everybody had felt that the musical reputation of the church was to become something unusual under his charge. And now, without a week's warning even, he had left them.

And the worst of it all was, that the curious St. Johnites could not tell why.

Alice Cramer could have told them if she had chosen to do so. And so could her proud old father whose wealth was so dear to him that he fancied every one was grasping for it. But neither of them saw fit to enlighten the wondering St. John's people, and by and by the matter dropped out of sight in some new excitement, and the organist of St. John's church was forgotten save by the few who had known him best, and who, knowing him, had loved him as a true and earnest friend.

The sunshine of a summer day lay over the German landscape. The languid tints of September had come before the August warmth had gone away, and the world seemed to have lost its sharp, clear outlines in a vague indefiniteness. The mountains, wrapped about in their warm purple atmosphere were like something seen in dreams, half forgotten, and yet real. The hills far away were only the ghosts of hills. The river, flowing swiftly through the valley, was the only thing in all the scene that seemed full of life and action.

Alice Cramer sat down upon a great rock, over which the fingers of fairies had woven a carpet of greenest moss, and looked away across the purple splendor of the afternoon, and thought. She had nothing to do but think now. She was alone in the world, free to go and come as she pleased. Over the sea a grave was growing green in a churchyard nook where her last relative was sleeping his last sleep.

The years that had come and gone since the man she had loved, and whom she had never forgotten—whom she never could forget—had kissed her and left her with a breaking heart, had brought some changes to her. She had grown more womanly; there were traces of the refining work of sorrow in her face. But it was a pure, beautiful face still.

In all the years gone by she had heard but once from Robert Leith. She had read in a city paper that he was going abroad to study. That was all. He seemed to have dropped out of her world, leaving no trace behind him.

This afternoon, as she sat there in the quiet of the summer day, she wondered if their paths would ever meet again. If he only knew that nothing kept them apart now, unless fate was interposing, would he come to her? And then the thought came to her that perhaps he had forgotten her. But he had told her at the last that he never would forget her, and she believed him.

The quaint German village below her grew dimmer as the sun dropped out of sight behind the mountains. She fancied that the valley, full of a cool, purplish-gray mist, now that sunset had come, was a sea, and the village growing more and more indistinct, was being swallowed up in it.

She heard the clatter of wheels down the rocky road, and saw faintly the scarlet jacket of the postilion as he reined his horses up at the door of the inn.

"Perhaps there are some travellers," she said, rising and wrapping her shawl about her. "Some one from America, like enough. I will go down and see."

It was twilight when she had clambered down the rocks and reached the village. She entered the inn, and stopped in the hall to listen to the piano in the one little parlor. It was the first time that she had heard it since she had been there.

There was something in the spell of the music and the moonlight which held her there. She could not see the player for the room was full of shadows, but, whoever it was, he knew how to get at the soul of the piano, and so she stood and listened.

Suddenly the music changed and Alice's heart gave a great leap, and then stood still. That melody! She had heard it before and she could never forget it. Never! It was the same beautiful story she had listened to years ago, beyond the sea, only now there was an undertone of passionate sadness and sorrow running through it that told of a longing and pain which would not be quieted. It was as if the player told the story of his love, while his heart was moaning under it all for his loss.

The melody died away in a wailing minor chord, and then there was silence in the room.

"Robert," she said, brokenly, as she paused upon the threshold. "Oh, Robert!"

The man at the piano sprang up at the sound of her voice and came toward her. The moon had climbed high enough to make the room white with radiance now, and he saw her standing there, with a great, unutterable gladness shining in her face. It was as if her soul shone through it.

"Alice, my Alice!" That was all he said, but there was need of no more words as he clasped her in his arms and kissed her.

The moonlight fell about them white and pure, like the benediction of God.

I have told you the story of the Alice Waltz. You have often listened to its wonderfully beautiful measure; and, after this when you hear it, it will have another charm for you I hope, when you remember how it brought two hearts together who had been so long apart.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

SONGS FROM THE SOUTHERN SEAS, AND OTHER POEMS. By JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY. Published by Roberts & Bros., Boston, and for sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, Philadelphia.

A large portion of this volume is occupied with the poems founded on stories which the poet became acquainted with in Australia. They are told in vigorous and generally harmonious verse. "The King of the Vasse" is very good indeed—its principal fault seeming to us a want of force and distinctness in the latter portion. "The Dukite Snake," and "The Dog Guard," are a little too horrible, we think, for poetry. But on the other hand, we have bright and vivid glimpses of the land of the tropics, such as this:

"How can I show you all the silent birds,
With strange metallic glintings on the wing?
Or how tell half their sadness in cold words—
The poor dumb lutes, the birds that never sing!"

And this:—

"The shadows darken 'neath the tall trees' screen,
While round their stems the rank and velvet green
Of undergrowth is deeper still; and there,
Within the double shade and steaming air,
The scarlet palm has fixed its noxious root,
And hangs the glorious poison of its fruit;
And there, 'mid shaded green and shaded light,
The steel-blue silent birds take rapid flight
From earth to tree, and tree to earth; and there
The crimson plumaged parrot cleaves the air
Like flying fire, and huge brown owls awake
To watch, far down, the stealing carpet snake,
Fresh skinned and glowing in his changing dyes,
With evil wisdom in the cruel eyes."

On the whole, we think there are much promise and considerable performance in Mr. O'Reilly's volume, and we wish him all success in the future.

A MAN OF HONOR. By GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON. Illustrated. New York: Orange Judd Company. For sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, Philadelphia.

We have read this book from beginning to end, and finish with the decided opinion that the author has settled the question whether he could write a good story. The style is lively, the characters marked with individuality, and the interest well sustained, else we should certainly not have read it through.

CHRISTOPHER CARSON. Familiarly known as Kit Carson. By J. S. C. ABBOTT. With Illustrations by ELEANOR GREATOREX. Published by Dodd & Mead, New York; and also for sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, Phila.

THE WOMEN OF THE ARABS. With a Chapter for Children. By the Rev. HENRY HARRIS JESSUP, D. D., Seventeen Years American Missionary in Syria. Edited by Rev. C. S. ROBINSON and Rev. ISAAC RILEY. Published by Dodd & Mead, New York; and also for sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, Phila.

THE ROSE OF DISENTIS. A Novel. By HEINRICH ZSCHOKKE. Translated from the German by JAMES J. D. TRENOR. Published by Sheldon & Co., New York; and also for sale by J. B. Lippincott & Co., Phila.

THE STUDY OF SOCIOLOGY. By HERBERT SPENCER, author of "A System of Philosophy," &c. Published by D. Appleton & Co., New York; and also for sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, Phila.

FRENCH HOME LIFE. Reprinted from Blackwood's Magazine. Published by D. Appleton & Co., New York; and also for sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, Phila. This is an interesting book, and does justice to French home life.

GILES'S MINORITY; OR, SCENES AT THE RED HOUSE. By Mrs. ROBERT O'REILLY, author of "Daisy's Companions," &c. Published by Roberts Brothers, Boston.

MISS FORRESTER. A Novel. By Mrs. EDWARDS, Author of "The Muses of May Fair," &c. Published by Sheldon & Co., New York; and also for sale by J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia.

NEW MUSIC.

LA CRÈME DE LA CRÈME. A collection of Music for Advanced Players. No. 1. Published by J. L. Peters, New York.

COME KISS ME, DARLING; and OH, DEAR, THE MEN ARE SO STUPID. Two new Songs. Published by W. W. Whitney, Toledo, Ohio.

☞ A remarkable accident recently occurred in England, by which a man was impaled by a crowbar. A number of men were employed in sinking a shaft, and at the close of the day's work, sent up their tools, preparatory to ascending themselves. The tools were placed in a wheelbarrow containing a mass of stiff clay, in which several bars were stuck upright. The barrow was hauled up by a rope connected with the elevating apparatus, worked by horse-power. As the barrow reached the top of the shaft one of the handles struck the side, causing it to tilt, and a bar five feet long and weighing thirty pounds, slipped out of the clay, and, falling, point downward, completely transfixed one of the men. The unfortunate man died in a few hours.

THE FROST.

BY GEORGE JOHNSON.

I come, I come from my Arctic halls,
Where the iceberg rears its glittering walls,
And the billows break with a sullen roar
'Gainst the snowy cliffs of the polar shore.

I have lingered long in a cheerless clime,
While the year has had its bud and prime,
And the golden harvest sprung from the sod
Of the desert fields that the winter trod.

As one for a triumph waits, so I
Have lain while the sun in the southern sky
Sank lower down and shortened his march
Through the glowing space of the azure arch.

For not till his sultry strength was spent,
And his fire-shod feet retreating went
Toward the South's bright gates dared I venture forth
From my fortress home in the frozen North.

Over mountain and plain, away, away!
I follow the track of the dying day;
And the green earth thrills with a silent fear,
As she feels me come with the darkness near.

With crystal bridges I span the streams,
And onward I sweep 'neath the moon's cold beams,
Till not a lone spot is there left uncrossed
By the flying form of the demon Frost.

Where I scatter the flakes of my driftless snow,
The light of the rosy morn will show
The beautiful wonders my hand has wrought,
Swift as the whirlwind, silent as thought.

To the dim, hushed woods in my flight I turn,
And to-morrow their faded leaves will burn
With a hundred hues as false as the glow
That flushes the cheek when the life is low.

The chestnuts drop at the touch of my wand,
And the shellbarks brushed by my viewless hand,
Rebound from the turf or plash in the rill,
Though the loaded boughs of the trees are still.

Oh, joy for the groups that at early morn
Come brushing their way through the wet-leafed corn,
When they find 'neath the colored leaves they stir
The scattered wealth of the hull and burr!

The grass, the corn, and the late-green wheat
Feel the icy tread of my silent feet,
And soon to take they will all be seen
The Autumn's brown for the Summer's green.

Alas, for the flowers! to them my breath
Is like a blast from a land of death,
Though some bloom on as if they knew
That the blighting frost is but colder dew.

But though I bring to the fields so gay
A terror that takes their gladness away;
Though the bloom and fragrance of sun-grown things
Must fade when I pass on my shadowy wings,

Yet a sweeter air and a lovelier sky
Shall follow me far as I hasten by;
And though clouds succeed and white storms fall,
A promise of life lies warm in them all.

Beyond the darkness, beyond the cold,
The map of the Spring is in beauty unrolled;
And glory and brightness descend to the Earth
As they did when the stars rejoiced at her birth!

As frost to the fields so death comes to man;
They perish—but only to flourish again.
So, mortals, take courage, and fear not the blast
That blows when the summer of life is past.

FROM LOVE TO LOVE.

BY ANNIE H. JEROME.

It was a fine old room, and fitted up with all the luxury that wealth could command. Its two occupants, a lovely girl, and an elderly man, noble in form, but dark and sinister in face, stood together under the full blaze of the great antique lamp swinging above their heads. They were discussing a long-disputed question. Old Mr. Lydell, flaming with passion at the girl's last words, burst out vehemently—

"You are not a slave, forsooth! Nevertheless, my haughty miss, you are mine by a heavy indebtedness. But tell me what you are, and who. You are called Edna Ivesly Hay; but what do you know of yourself beyond that? Answer me if you can! Have not I been the making of you? Did not I take you from the gutters and transform you into what you are? You are accomplished. Whose money rendered you so? Mine! ungrateful girl! You are graceful as a fairy. Whose money paid the master that drilled you? Mine again! You are beautiful in your silks, jewels and dainty laces. Whose money makes you that? Mine, and mine only! And wherefore have I done all this? Because the son I idolize set his boyish heart upon your baby loveliness, and in riper years crowned you with honor by choosing you for his wife. Think you, then, that I can be wheedled out of the reward I claim? If so, think it no longer. If you have not already learned the truth, learn it now. My son's will is my law—the love I bear him my only religion! Do you understand? Do you understand that I mean you shall, with or without your consent, become his wife, simply because it is his will? If not, understand it now, and drive from your silly head that beggarly secretary I drove from my doors. I shall choose your husband, and not you, who would to-day be a beggar on the streets but for my generous protection. Theodore loves you—therefore, Theodore's you shall be! To-morrow he comes. Be wise, and receive him as your future husband!"

There was a sinister threat in the old man's eyes, as he concluded, that sent an involuntary shiver through the girl's slender frame. But a determination equal to his own marked both words and tone as she answered respectfully:

"It is true that I am indebted to you for all that I possess of worldly good, and I am, Heaven knows, truly and deeply grateful. My daily life stands witness to the sincerity of my words. You bade me call you father, and I have striven, as in Heaven's sight, to give you all a daughter's duty. But, as I said before, I am not your slave. Theodore Lydell I will never marry. Dote on him as you will, your handsome, gifted son is naught but a polished villain. I would rather die than link my fate with his! Cast me off—let me go out into the world and battle against the poverty from which you rescued me, or—"

"Enough!" thundered the old man. "I have made you mine, and mine you shall remain, and my will do, slave or no slave! My son shall have the bride of his choice! Now go!" And striding to the door he flung it wide, adding in deep, hissing tones, as Edna passed calmly into the hall: "Go! and remember that for the insubordinate there are means! Our new home, here, was chosen for its wildness and loneliness! Remember that, and likewise that my son and I are masters here! Now go!"

A swift change passed over the girl's calm face as the door closed behind her, and it was with fleet foot and panting breath that she sped up the stairs and to her chamber.

"What can be mean? What will he do?" she gasped shudderingly, as she dropped into a chair before the blazing grate. "He is deep, and unscrupulous as the lost, I know. Heaven help me!"

Her head sunk despondingly on her hand, and the silent minutes dropped into hours before she moved. At last she rose.

"I will do it!" she whispered, "and this very night, or it may be too late. They all sleep by this time, and I have no minutes to waste," she hastily added, as the little mantel clock softly chimed twelve o'clock. "At one, I have heard the servants say, a stage passes Hart's corner on its way to N——, and once at N——, I can take the cars."

Her few preparations were rapidly made, and somewhat later she stood trembling within the friendly shadow of the great trees through which the sharp December wind was sweeping its weird song.

For a minute eye and ear were keenly vigilant. But all remained silent, and with renewed hope she crept cautiously to the highway.

A rapid walk soon brought her to Hart's corner, and none too soon. She had barely reached it when the stage turned the curve of the mountain.

"Why it's a woman, as I'm alive!" exclaimed the driver, as he drew rein at Edna's signal. "All right! plenty of room, ma'am." Then to the occupants of the stage: "Halloo there! one of you passengers; won't you be kind enough to give the lady a lift?"

"Certainly, certainly," was responded good-naturedly from within, as the door opened and a helping hand was unceremoniously thrust out.

Edna sprung lightly in, and with a quiet "thank you," shrunk into a corner seat and was soon forgotten. Two long hours of feverish desire to push forward more rapidly at last ended, and amidst the rush and thunder of a swifter flight she matured her still somewhat indefinite plans. As a first step toward the accomplishment of these plans she left the cars at daybreak, selecting an insignificant station as most favorable to her purpose.

It is, however, needless to follow her through the tortuous journey by which she designed to baffle pursuit. The sun had gone down, indeed night long set in, when, heart-sick and weary, a gleaming light from a handsome cottage tempted her to seek shelter there rather than at the public house of the village just ahead. Accordingly she entered the grounds, and with light step approached the house.

But the exhaustive effects of unusual fatigue and excitement had told severely upon a somewhat fragile nervous system, and it was with unsteady hand and beating heart that she drew the bell. At its first vibration a deep-mouthed hound came leaping around the cottage and along the porch, and when the door opened, revealing a tall, raw-boned female of most severe aspect, her modicum of strength gave out, and instead of the effective little speech so carefully prepared, she gasped some unintelligible words, and fell fainting into the arms involuntarily extended to receive her.

The arms were good muscular ones, and she was hastily borne into a charming little parlor in which sat the mistress of the cottage.

"What is it, Burns?" she asked, without looking from the glancing needles in her hand.

"I dinna ken, Miss Ruth, unless it be a woman frae the skies that dropped doon i' my arms. It's weel they are stout, for she's heavy-like, though an ilka thing," Burns coolly replied, depositing her burden suspiciously on the sofa.

Miss Ruth sprang to her feet with an alacrity that sent her ball of yarn to the opposite side of the room, and left her work pendant on the corner of the work-table beside her.

"Poor dear! poor dear!" she sighed, leaning over Edna's inanimate form, her helpful fingers actively busy. "Chafe her hands, Burns, while I loosen her clothes. What a beauty she is, poor dear!"

Burns set to work, her tongue keeping time to the operation.

"Noo, Miss Ruth, I'm the stay o' this auld house o' the Neals, an' syne you war a bairn o' a minute auld I've done your will. An' noo you maun list to me. Dinna be rinnin' daft noo! You ken naught o' this girl who looks sweet i' the face to be sure, an' I pray you to be carefu' like. I ha' nae confidence i' these night trampers. Dinna forget the puir weak auld woman who aped awa' on a mon's legs wi' a dozen o' the auld Neal spoons i' her gown pocket."

Miss Neal, actively engaged in efforts to restore Edna to consciousness, suffered Burns to run on to this point, which was, in truth, a very sore one. But here she turned sharply around, commanding sternly—

"Hush! Cannot you see that the poor little thing is a lady? I'm ashamed of you, Mary Burns!"

That "Mary Burns" settled the matter. An hour's lecture would not have proved half so effectual as that emphatic enunciation of the baptismal name, which was never heard from Miss Ruth save on occasions similar to the present.

But Edna directly opening her eyes, caught sight of the tall figure, with its stiff angularities, erect as an old grenadier on duty, behind plump little Miss Ruth, and intuitively comprehended that she was an object of suspicion in that quarter. The serene, kindly face of Miss Ruth was, however, a gift for which she was thankful, and with a shadowy smile and a faltering "Thank you, I am quite well again," she attempted to rise.

"Not quite," returned Miss Ruth, a low, pleasant laugh rippling over her lips at the ineffectual effort. "Lie still, my dear, till Burns gets you a cup of tea."

"How good you are!" impulsively cried Edna, as the door closed on Burns.

And she cast her arms about the little lady who was bending over her, and drew a plump, rosy cheek down to her lips. Miss Ruth's heart had pulsated through fifty odd years; but it was still a very soft one, and Edna slipped at once into its softest niche.

This the keen-witted Burns, on returning with the ordered tray, quickly perceived, and as promptly commented upon when again out of hearing.

"The Neals war a' alike," she grumbled. "Shake them a' thegither i' a big bag, an' you'd ne'er ken ane frae anither, unless Miss Ruth might fa' out the simplest o' a'!"

But Miss Ruth, unconscious as regardless of Burns's depreciative opinion, answered Edna's regrets and apologetic remark that her journey would be resumed early the next morning with a cordiality which would have doubly exasperated the kitchen divinity had she been an eye or ear witness of the scene. It must, however, be admitted that when Edna—after mentioning as her name the abbreviated one of Miss Ives—naively made the embarrassed remark that her present position would be satisfactorily explained at a later day, Miss Ruth felt anxious.

"She's so young!" she thought. "Perhaps I ought to press her confidence. But Malcolm, dear boy, will come to-night, and he can advise me."

It was yet early in the evening when Miss Neal conducted her guest up-stairs.

"I hope, my dear," she said, as they exchanged good-nights, "that your rest will not be disturbed. I am in hourly expectation of my nephew, who has been abroad for several months, and it may be late before he gets here. But we will remember our guest, and exercise due care over our tones and movements; and also chain Rover, whose noisy welcome would certainly disturb you."

With a cordial good-night, she left the room. In a moment she returned.

"It occurred to me," she laughed, "that I ought to charge you not to be alarmed if, in the course of the night, you should hear the sound of stealthy footsteps. Burns has a singular propensity to prowl around the house at the most unseasonable hours with an aching ear or tooth. And now I will bid you a final good-night."

Mentally and physically exhausted, Edna's sleep was sound and dreamless for a time. Then she grew restless, and was finally awakened by a low murmur of voices which became more distinct as the speakers left the stairs and entered the room communing with her own. The manly tones were too low to impress her careless ear. But Miss Neal's louder ones reached her with a sharp pang; for it was easy to surmise of whom they spoke.

"So you advise our watching her movements till we gain some information of her and her friends?"

The answer was too low to reach Edna; but she concluded it was an assent, for Miss Neal returned—

"I hate to do it. She's a dear, lovable little thing, but very young, and about as experienced as a kitten."

Then followed some observations relating to the gentleman's personal comfort—and directly the door closed on her retiring steps.

With trembling anxiety Edna waited for an hour or more, and then rose. Lighted by the decaying fire and a brilliant moon, she made a hasty toilet, and was soon standing without her room prepared for another flight.

Oppressed by a nervous dread of the untimely aching of Burns's ears or teeth, she paused a moment to listen. But profound silence reigned over the cottage, and her muffled boots gave no sound as she cautiously groped her way down-stairs. Remembering that she had carelessly noticed, on her way to bed, that the back-door was fastened by a latch and bolt, she directed her steps to that point as offering possibilities of a more quiet egress than the heavily chained and locked front one.

Her trembling hand was about to start the bolt when a footfall in the dining-room warned her of danger. There was no time to lose; and in a moment she had slipped into a closet just beside her under the stairs, the door of which her groping fingers had an instant before discovered ajar.

She had barely entered when the dining-room door opened, and the footstep sounded in the hall, though no light appeared. It passed on to the stairs, and all might have been well had not her clumsy boot come in contact with Burns's basket of clothes-pins. Instantly the appalling clatter was followed by Burns's voice exclaiming in a low tone—

"Them rats again!" And as she reached the spot and fumbled along the door, she added, even more irefully—"An' here's the door ase the uncanny things can rin in an' out!" And a quick snap of the turning key ended the complaint.

For an instant Edna was in despair. The next questionable comfort was found in Burns's muttered threat, as she moved quickly away.

"A candle and poker'll quiet you, or I dinna ken!"

With heart beating to suffocation Edna prepared for the encounter by drawing the hood of her water-proof more closely about her face.

Very soon the step returned. A hand softly touched the key. It turned; the lock snapped; but ere the door could by moved by the cautious Burns, Edna, hooded and veiled, threw herself against it with all her might, at the same time uttering a low guttural sound to add terror to her onset. And it all proved too much for Burns. Instantly she lay a discomfited heap upon the floor, candle and spirit alike extinguished.

With swift fingers, Edna unfastened the door and darted out, intensity of dread winging her feet, as she fled from the place. As the gate swung behind her she paused a moment to remove the clumsy socks from her boots, and then continued her wild flight with redoubled speed. She was not however, as she hoped, unobserved.

Malcolm Royle, aroused from his pleasant dreams by the commotion below, sprung from his bed and, while rapidly preparing to answer his aunt's frightened entreaties, caught sight of Edna's little figure under the firs.

Meantime, Burns remained quiescent, a prey to a thousand conflicting emotions; the chief of which regarded her unexampled faithfulness in protecting the lives and property of the Neals. Not for a kingdom would she have stirred a limb till Miss Ruth had become eye-witness to the condition to which the indignity just suffered had reduced her stately person. So she patiently awaited the sound of the longed-for voice directly calling over the balusters:

"Burns! Burns!"

"Oh, Miss Ruth, rin doon," was the solemn reply.

"Where are you? What is the matter?" Miss Neal anxiously returned.

"The matter! I'm dead, Miss Ruth, doon i' the ha'!"

And presently, to Burns's vast content, Miss Neal appeared.

"Burns!" exclaimed the lady, gently taking candlestick and poker from the hands still desperately grasping them, and the candle from its safe lodging place under the wrinkled chin.

Half inclined to laugh, Miss Neal continued as she proceeded to the no light task of getting Burns once more upright.

"How did you manage to fall into this miserable plight, Burns?"

"I'd been doon to the ingle wi' my tooth," answered Burns excitedly, "an' was gangin' to bed again when there came a noise frae the closet there. I said it was the rats; sae I rin and locked the door till I could gang for the candle an' poker i' your hand; an' wi' them i' mine I unlocked the door carefu' like, when it flew open wi' an awfu' sound, an' struck my puir auld head wi' a whack that smithered my light, an' sent me doon there. Then twa robbers tumbled over my feet—twa robbers wi' twa great lumberin' feet—an' out the house wi' nacbody to stop 'em?"

Burns had just finished her graphic account, when Malcolm Royle, in leaving his room noticed a fragment of white cambric caught under the half-closed door of the chamber lately occupied by the guest, thus far completely forgotten by all. Some thought called a smothered exclamation from him, and he hastily picked up the article, which proved to be a lady's handkerchief.

A peculiar delicate perfume of which Edna was especially fond thrilled him into an eager search for the owner's name.

"Edna!" he exclaimed, gazing incredulously at the embroidered characters. "It was Edna! No wonder I was reminded of her." And thrusting the handkerchief into his pocket, he set the candlestick on the little hall table and rushed down-stairs and out of the house.

Swift-footed as a gazelle, Edna had sped on, fancying a Burns in every breeze, till Malcolm Royle's flying leaps proved that she was indeed pursued, and by one whose speed and strength vastly exceeded her own. But frantic with excitement and fear she persevered, converting the anguished "Edna! Edna!" ringing hoarsely on the night air, into so many shouts of triumph. And when at last a light hand fell on her shoulder, and she reeled fainting into the friendly arms behind her, she still believed herself vanquished by a foe.

"Poor darling! poor darling! What does it all mean, I wonder," murmured Malcolm Royle, showering tender kisses on the closed eyes and white lips as he gathered the little form to his heart, and turned his steps homeward.

His appearance on the cottage threshold with his insensible burden, drew an indignant outburst from Burns, who had, to Miss Neal's dismay, just discovered the flight of their guest, and also, that another dozen of the heavy Neal spoons had vanished.

The silencing rebuke which met her invectives was sharp as unexpected; but soon very satisfactorily explained by the ardent words which answered Edna's low, glad "Malcolm!" when consciousness returned.

Ever faithful to the house of Neal, she instantly reversed her opinion of Edna, and stood ready to wage war against any who might question the entire perfection of Malcolm Royle's chosen bride. So she contentedly left the room, and not long after Miss Neal was beckoned out to hear that the missing spoons were safe in a hiding-place quite forgotten in the excitement of the hour.

Little more remains to be told. Edna's death-like swoon was followed by a full detail of her troubles, and the next day she joyously became the bride of Malcolm Royle—the "beggarly secretary" who was now able to offer a home as well as a heart.

A few days later Mr. Lydell and his son appeared on the scene, though only to make a hasty exit. Mrs. Malcolm Royle was beyond their power.

What He Brought, and What He Found.

BY CLIO STANLEY.

"Patty, have you been up to the hall, yet, to see the beautiful things brought home from foreign lands?"

And bright-eyed Sara Chappell put her head in at the open window, where Martha Mason sat dreaming over a bit of sewing, and touched her friend softly on either cheek.

"What wonderful things?" Martha asked, slowly, the color growing brighter in her cheeks.

"And you can sit there quietly and ask me that, when you have the liberty of the whole house, and I can only get stolen glances, now and then, into the mysteries of fairy land! But I'll tell you what I know, and perhaps it will tempt you to learn more."

And Sara dropped her basket at her friend's feet, and folded her arms above the window-sill.

"There are beautiful pictures without number—and without name to me—some of them in glowing colors, and some just in soft light and shade, like that child's head behind you, that the young master gave you when he went away. There are boxes of carved, scented woods, as curious as the jungles they came from, and vases of brass and strange pottery that I could make nothing of. The last things I saw unpacked were a bull of Bashan and Lot's wife!" said Sara, demurely.

Martha started suddenly and stared at her friend in amazement.

"I thought you would be astonished," laughed Sara. "Now if you would only put down your work, and run over there, you could see everything for yourself."

"But did you really see it—Lot's wife, I mean?" asked Martha, her cheeks on fire.

"Well, I really saw a queer, salty-looking thing, which Mrs. Johnson said was Lot's wife, or a piece of her at any rate. I suppose she must be fragments by this time, and all the travellers, like Master De Witt, are gathering up baskets full that nothing may be lost," quoted Sara, it must be confessed, a little irreverently.

But Martha did not hear it. Her thoughts were busy in the past.

She was thinking of a day long ago when the handsome son and heir of Squire De Witt had stood there by that very window, and looked at her with bright, admiring glances, holding her little hand close clasped in his own.

"And what shall I bring you from over the seas, little Patty?" he had asked, his merry voice suddenly grown tender as a love-song. "Tell me what I can do to prove my devotion, and to win you, my red rose?"

And she had laughed and said, "Bring me a bit of old Lot's wife, who was turned to salt so long ago."

She had always had a passion for gathering curious things, and her home-made cabinets were really wonderful things in their way.

And so he had remembered after all. In all these months, when the silence between them had been so dreary, she had not been forgotten! How her heart throbbed under the dainty bodice, and how her cheeks glowed and her eyes shone.

She had dropped her face in her hands in a rush of sweet forgetfulness, and she never knew at what moment her friend stole away; but when she looked up, and found herself alone, she dropped her work hastily, and running down through the garden path, she crossed the belt of green woods that lay between the cottage and the Hall, pausing only when she met her grandmother coming out through the great door.

"Leave me the key, grandmother, and I will bring it safe home. I want to see the wonderful things too."

"So Sara has been over then! Well, go in and feast your bright eyes, for Master De Witt will be home to-night, and maybe you'll not have another chance."

Before old Mrs. Mason was fairly down the steps Patty stood inside the long-unused drawing-room, feasting her eyes indeed, but only through a luminous haze of tears. Suspicious little sparkles that caused Charlie De Witt's heart to stand still as he watched her, himself unseen.

He had been in the house all the afternoon, but had not thought it worth while to disturb Mrs. Mason at her work. It was quite a different matter now! With half a dozen quick, noiseless steps, he was at Patty's side.

"I wonder which is Lot's wife!" she had just said, carefully lifting, one after another, the curious things on the table and floor.

"Never mind Lot's wife, my darling!" he said, clasping her in his arms, and kissing the rosy cheeks; "it concerns me more to know if I have my own wife here. If I had been Mr. Lot, and you had been Mrs. Lot, I should never have left you in the plain!"

"Oh, Charlie!"

It was all she could say—but voice and glance said a thousand sweet things besides.

"Ah, my little Patty, if brevity is the soul of love, as wise people say it is of wit, I am satisfied."

And he held her close with one arm, while with the hand that was disengaged, he took up the curious things he had brought from over the seas, and showed them to her.

It was so that Grandmother Mason found them two hours later, when she came to look for Patty.

"Martha, what does it mean?" she said, with a very grave face, sad enough for tears.

But Patty only ran and kissed her, while Charlie looked at her with fondest pride as he said—

"Patty belongs to me, Mrs. Mason. I have bought her in exchange for Lot's wife. And we shall want you to come and look after us both. Isn't it so, my dear?"

But Patty answered never a word, only hid her blushing, happy face on her grandmother's shoulder.

And old Mrs. Mason said between the wife he had brought and the wife he had found, he ought surely to be a contented Squire of the old Hall.

☞ A WOODEN PRESENT.—During the progress of the festivities attending the celebration of a wooden wedding in New York, recently, an unusually loud pull was heard at the door bell. Upon opening the door a basket was discovered on the door-step. Thoughts of an addition to their family rushed through the heads of the bride and the groom, which seemed almost certain upon a closer examination of the basket and contents. Rolled up in a blanket appeared the semblance of a fine, healthy child, attired in Oriental costume. To the blanket was pinned a note, on opening which was found a hundred-dollar greenback. The note read as follows:

"Dear Sir:—Please secure a good home for this treasure in some pious family. We hope the $100 bill enclosed will be used by you for the child, and there is more of the same sort where that came from. Don't let the poor fellow go to the poor-house. His name is Henry. His parents are poor but honest, his father being a counterfeiter. Let me hear the result in the New York Herald."

A closer examination of the contents of the basket showed the child to be a wooden one, about two feet high, while one of the less startled of the guests discovered the bill to be a wooden one, so far as its value was concerned.

☞ At Detroit, the other day, a little bit of a woman was on the platform of the Central depot, and wanted her trunk carried down to the baggage master's office. She appealed to a burly, big fellow to carry it, when he replied, "Bless me! but I'll take both of you!" He picked up the trunk in one hand, seized the woman under the other, and, despite her screams and kicks, carried her the whole length of the depot.

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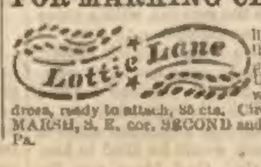

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THE BLIGHT IS AT THE CORE.

Let my kisses fall upon thee,
And my tears, as did the dew;
Heard we not his vows together,
Faded rose-queen, I and you?
Withered now thy leaflet's splendor,
All thy fresh, sweet fragrance o'er;
Still the rose my cheek is dyeing,
But the blight is at the core.

Dost remember how the crimson
Of the leaflets midst my hair
Trembled with a sweet emotion
On the night he called me fair?
How the moonlight through the casement
Shone our fond embraces o'er?
Still the rose my cheek is dyeing,
But the blight is at the core.

Rose, dear Rose, if I were lying
Faded, cold, and, like thee, dead,
Those false eyes that looked so tender
Not one pitying tear would shed.
Love? it was not love he gave me,
Shallow passion, nothing more;
Still the rose my cheek is dyeing,
But the blight is at the core.

When the moon the world is bathing
In a flood of silvery light,
Sad at heart, alone, forgotten,
Gaze I out upon the night.
Flowering hope's brief season over,
Reign, too brief, forever o'er;
Still the rose my cheek is dyeing,
But the blight is at the core.

Busy life is all about me,
But the hunger at my heart,
Unappeased, and yet incessant,
Pierces like some cruel dart.
Smiles around the lip may hover,
Yet the soul be bruised and sore;
Still the rose my cheek is dyeing,
But the blight is at the core.

A STRANGE SUMMONS.

A STORY OF NEW YEAR'S EVE.

BY C. H. CURTIS.

It is not much of a story. But the circumstances of which it tells, seemed to me at the time of their occurrence so full of pathos, that I think they may not lose in print their power to touch the heart.

Years ago, upon the close of a winter afternoon, I happened to be in a surveyor's camp far up in the pine forests of Maine. The labor of the day was done, and as the darkness came swiftly down upon us, surrounded as we were with towering mountains and mighty trees, the fires were lighted, and those of us who had no share in the tasks of the commissary department, sat beneath the overhanging roof of the rude hut which formed the nucleus of the camp. In front of us, the great fire of hemlock logs and branches roared and blazed and crackled, as its huge tongue of flame leapt upward toward the black sky, and made the darkness of the forest seem more awful and impenetrable. The ruddy light that shone upon our faces as we sat motionless, illuminated another and more active group close at hand. Two men were busy preparing supper, and beside them four or five others were skinning a moose which had been shot during the day, and were talking loudly and with excitement of their hunting adventures as the smeared blades of their knives now and then shot back to us the glittering light of the fire. In front of and below us lay the river, its swift current chained by the ice, and its white surface stretching far out until it was lost in the gloom beyond.

No sound came to break the stillness of that vast solitude, save the voices at our side, the soughing of the wind overhead among the pine cones, the intermittent howl of the wolf, and now and then the shrill cry of some distant loon.

I was the guest of my friend Leslie, the chief of the party, and I ate with him when the meal was served. He was moody and taciturn, strangely enough. When I strove to provoke him to conversation or to excite in him his usual mirthful humor, he replied in monosyllables or with a sad smile, and again relapsed to gravity and silence.

After supper we were alone, while the others played cards and told stories in the hut, and I said:

"What's the matter with you to-night, Leslie? You seem to have a terrible fit of the blues."

He hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"I am depressed, somewhat, it is true. I—I—the truth is, Curtis, my mind is disturbed with a little matter. In fact—"

Here he paused, and leaned his head upon his hand, while he gazed with a troubled look upon the ground. I did not know how sacred his emotions might be, and so I did not venture to disturb his revery. Presently he lifted his head suddenly, and said to his servant:

"Martin, did you hear any voice while we were up at the swamp to-day—any voice that you knew?"

"None but yours and mine, Mr. Leslie," replied the man.

"And you were close beside me, too, when I dropped my instrument, and you thought I had fainted, did you not?"

"Yes, sir, as near as Mr. Curtis is to you now, but I heard nothing out of the way, sir."

"That will do," said Leslie, dismissing him. "It is strange," he exclaimed, as Martin went away, "very strange; but I know I must be right. I must, I must."

"What was the nature of the sound you heard?" I inquired, with some hesitation.

"I will tell you the whole story," he said, "for I feel that I must give my confidence to some one, and you are the man I would surely choose for that trust.

"Twenty years ago I married a woman whom I loved, and whom I now love with eager and overpowering affection. We lived most happily together for five or six years, but we had no children, and my wife grieved, as only a childless woman can, over that fate, not only because it left unsatisfied a strong craving of her nature, but because she knew that I should be happier if I had some one to whom I could leave my name and my wealth. I think that good woman must have prayed earnestly for such a blessing, and her prayers were answered, but not as she expected and hoped.

"One night, just such a bitter night as this, my door-bell rang violently, and presently the servant entered with a basket, which she found lying upon the step. We examined it, and discovered within, snugly wrapped away, a pretty infant, a girl. My wife's heart overflowed with tender sympathy for the tiny waif, abandoned by its parents, and she gave it a hearty welcome. Hot flannels, warm milk, and doubtless many more luxuries than were good for the little one, were quickly at hand, and soon the child was chirping and crowing as merrily as we could wish. Before bed-time we felt well acquainted with it, and indeed already attached to it, and it had fairly become a member of our household.

"I need not tell you how, as the years passed swiftly away, the baby grew to be a beautiful little girl, bright, intelligent, and with most gentle manners, and a most loving disposition. It is the old story. She wound herself about our hearts until we loved her as tenderly as if she had been our own. And she knew, too, how to kindle other and humbler souls with affection. The very servants were devoted to her, and my man Martin, who came into my service soon after the child was found, was under the same powerful spell, and would I verily believe at any moment have given his life for hers. Then my wife died, and Maggie, the child, was all I had in the world that I cared for. Sometimes she had strange, odd ways about her which I could not understand, but which I believed to be the evidence of the inheritance of peculiar characteristics from her unknown parents—characteristics which I conceived to have been nearly altogether eradicated by my careful training. She would continually talk to herself in the most singular manner, and she would often tell me of queer things that she had dreamed. They were such dreams as, I verily believe, never disturbed the rest of any child before.

"But I thought little of these things until one night in December, five years ago, I sat in my library with Maggie upon my knee, and in the dusk talked to her and told stories for her while her fair head nestled upon my breast. Then I began to say to her that I had planned a little journey for her to the city, upon New Year's Day, and I was in the midst of my story, trying to paint to her childish mind in glowing colors the pleasures of the trip, when she lifted her head suddenly, and said—

"'But, papa, I won't be here then.'

"She said it so strangely that a cold shiver passed through me. I did not know why, but I think I must have had a foreboding of evil; and I said—

"'What do you mean, my child?'

"'Why, I won't be with you on New Year's; I am going away.'

"I said to her, somewhat sadly, 'Why do you say that, Maggie? Who told you you were going away?'

"'Mamma,' she replied, looking up into my face. 'She came to my room last night, and said I was soon to go away and be with her, and I know I am going, though I shall be sorry, very sorry to leave you, papa,' and then she laid her head upon my breast, threw her arms about me and sobbed.

"A wild fear filled my heart as I stroked her golden hair, and soothed her with loving words, which brought to my soul none of the comfort and assurance which I hoped they would bring to hers. But she shook her head and wept, and said, over and over again, that she knew her mamma had come to see her, and that she must soon go into the strange land to meet her.

"Alas! my friend, the childish prophecy was true. The next day her cheeks wore a brighter hue than ever, and the flush became more and more intense until the fever laid her low upon her bed. Then I watched by her side, day after day and night after night, with a terrible dread ever present in my mind; and on the last night of the year, as I held her little hand in mine and gazed with eagerness in her face and upon the drooping eyelids which shut me from her, she began to speak as to herself; I felt her grasp tighten for a moment, her eyes opened wide and seemed to look out upon a scene to which my dull sense was blinded. Then a sweet smile lit her pure young face, and she exclaimed—

"'Yes, mamma, I am coming! Oh, mamma, mamma dear, take me!' And the next moment she was with the angels.

"I tell you Curtis, that in that region of celestial beauty to which she had gone, there was no spirit more pure and fair than hers."

I sat in silence while Leslie continued.

"I laid her in the churchyard beside her mother, and turning away from those graves, I left home, and friends, and old associations, and became a wanderer. Martin, who sorrowed as if he had been bereft of his own child, went with me, and ever since we two have led this life which you now see.

"To-day while Martin and I were busy with our work up there in the woods, and while I was thinking of nothing but the duties in which I was engaged, I heard my child's voice as clearly and distinctly as you hear mine now, and it said: 'You will come to-day.' I was greatly startled, and I turned quickly to look at Martin, thinking I may have been mistaken in the sound. But he was standing quietly by, and in answer to my question, he declared that he had not spoken, and that he had heard no sound. I proceeded with my duties, greatly troubled—and a few moments afterward, the voice said again: 'To-day; you will come to us to-day.' There could be no mistake this time. It was my child who spoke to me, and the shock was so great that I would have fallen to the ground if Martin had not caught me in his arms.

"Curtis, you know that I am not a superstitious man, but I firmly believe that I shall not see to-morrow's sun. My brief life of sorrow will end before the morning comes. I am as sure of that as a mortal man can ever be of anything."

Then he rose, and sauntering into the hut he flung himself upon the floor and lay there wrapt in gloomy meditation. The man Martin, who had watched us closely throughout the conversation, came up to me and said, as he glanced at the figure lying in there upon the bed of leaves and blankets—

"He was speakin' to you of Maggie, sir! And all that he says of her is the solemn truth; she was an angel, if there ever was one on this earth. We all loved the child, sir, and he was as kind to her as man need ever be. God bless him for it. He was a better father to her than her own father could have been, I know."

As we turned in that night the rising wind gave warning of a coming storm; but we heaped high the logs and drew our blankets close around us, and beneath the snug roof of the hut felt that we could defy the blast and the rain. And so we went soundly to sleep. About midnight a terrific crash disturbed the silence of the night, and in an instant every man was upon his feet. A mighty pine tree that grew close to the hut had been hurled by the gale to the earth. It fell right athwart the fire, and as we came forward a torrent of sparks swirled upward and swept away out into the forest. We all uttered an exclamation of thankfulness that the tree had failed to touch the cabin in its descent, when Martin gave a cry of horror and sprang forward.

There lay Leslie by the fire, with the great trunk upon his breast. He was motionless, and the blood gushed from his mouth. He had found that he could not sleep, and during the night he had gone out to sit alone by its blaze. Thus fate made him the only victim.

Martin knelt by Leslie's side and called to him. Presently the wounded man opened his eyes, and then the servant, with a voice broken with sobs, exclaimed—

"It was I—I who was Maggie's father. I deserted her; I—I gave her up to you, Mr. Leslie. Her mother went to the bad and left me and the babe, and I was so poor and so useless that I sent the child to you, for I knew you would be kind to her. God bless you, sir. God bless you for your goodness to her." And the man lay prone upon the earth weeping piteously.

Leslie looked at him for a moment with a faint smile upon his face; then he turned his eyes to me, as if to recall his words respecting the prophecy; then there was a gasp, a moan and a faint cry, and the end came.

And so, out through the vast and awful gate of Death he went to Paradise. To us the dawn came, gray and gloomy with the dreary mist and the driving rain, which shrouded forest and river and mountain, and blotted from our vision the fair face of Nature. But he awoke amid the splendors of eternal morning, and in sweet communion with his beloved began the New Year of Immortality.

A LOW OPINION OF HIGH ART.

Innkeeper to Artist (who is touching up picture, the weather too wet for going out).—"Ah! that be uncommon like the old church, that be. Now, do you think, Mr. Artist, you could paint me a beer barrel for a signboard? I'd give you a dollar for it."

THE CASHIER'S PLOT.

BY MARK EDWARDS.

"I'm in for it—the truth will soon be known," groaned Charles Miller, as in dire perplexity he sat poring over the accounts of the bank of which he was cashier. "The deficit is enormous—I cannot possibly restore the money I have used, nor conceal the fact of its mal-appropriation. Everything goes against me. Stocks are falling fearfully; my last venture, that promised so well, is worse than any. Oh, Heaven! why did I enter upon this dishonest and ruinous course. But it is too late now to bewail my action. To-day I am trusted and honored; to-morrow I may be disgraced before the world. There is but one door of escape open—to enter at once into the proposed collusion with those villains. I can make it appear that *they* have carried off the securities, for which a call will be made in a day or two; that I was seized and forced, under threat of death, to give up the keys of the vaults; in short, that the old game of involuntary agency has been played against me. It is my own plot—I sent the intimation to Ralph Hardy that I was at his service as an 'involuntary' assistant. He understands me. A line dropped to him will close the bargain. I will do it. Home, family, friends, standing—I cannot give them up yet."

A fearful agitation had been visible in his frame, but now he grew suddenly calm. The base resolve had been taken. To save himself from exposure and disgrace, to his already great dishonesty he had determined to add treachery and further crime.

There was no help for it, he argued. Self-preservation was the first law of nature; he would obey it.

And then Charles Miller deliberately wrote to a certain "professional" of high degree a letter, which forever condemned its author as base and cowardly. He, the fair-seeming, popular and honored man of business and society! A living lie he would henceforth be among his fellows. The letter was secretly sent.

The night following its delivery the residence of Charles Miller was feloniously entered. Masked men made their way unopposed into his bed-chamber. A feigned struggle took place; he was overpowered, and in the presence of his terror-stricken wife, threatened with immediate death if he did not deliver the keys of the bank and its vaults to the robbers. After a great show of resistance and defiance he gave them up. The residence of the cashier, as is often the case in country towns, adjoined the bank. He was "forced" to enter the latter and point out the depository of the valuables it contained.

All this with a display of protest and injured innocence quite the thing for the occasion.

The thieves took all of value that was to be found, and then departed, leaving the faithless cashier bound and gagged in the banking-room to carry out the show.

Morning came, and his situation was discovered. He was apparently much mortified, secretly much gratified at the predicament in which he was found. But alas for the success of his ruse to cover his defalcation!

On the floor of the banking-room a letter was found—his own, undeniably—revealing the treacherous wickedness of which he was guilty. The leader of the band had dropped it there, and now it was a fearful and silent witness against its author.

What could he say in his defence? Nothing. The astounded officers of the bank saw that his guilt was entire. The hopeless dismay expressed in his features when he saw that he was unmasked, proclaimed the truth.

The way of the transgressor is hard. Charles Miller became an inmate of a prison—later he filled the grave of a suicide.

☞ In these lives of ours, tender little acts do more to bind hearts together than great deeds or heroic words, since the first are like the dear daily bread that none can live without, the latter but occasional feasts—beautiful and memorable, but not possible to all.

DORA WILSON.

BY HARRIET WARE STILLMAN.

"And this is the likeness of which of your friends?"

"Edward Lacy."

"Ah, indeed! How fine-looking he is. I have heard that you are engaged to him. Is it true, Dora, dear?"

"Yes, Maude. But I wonder how you heard of it?"

"Oh, no matter how. And that splendid ring on your left hand is the engagement ring? A real diamond! Isn't it delightful to have a lover who can lavish such costly bijoux upon you? Oh, Dora, how much you must think of him!"

An indignant flush rose to Dora Wilson's face. Could Maude Dorrance think that she, Dora Wilson, loved Edward Lacy because he was able to give her diamonds? She restrained her feelings. Maude continued her lively, heartless chat.

"Why, Dora, how you blush at mention of him. It makes you look so charming. Doesn't Mr. Lacy senior own that splendid estate adjoining your father's land? Oh, yes, I remember hearing Mrs. Dill say that the wealthy Mr. Lacy lived there. And he has no child but this splendid Edward. How fortunate! Oh, Dora Wilson, you simple, charming, meek-eyed little violet! How you will be elevated by this marriage! Not one woman in a thousand can hope to secure so fine an establishment as you have in view. I should be a simpleton not to envy you."

"You might well envy me, Maude, if you knew how noble are Edward's mind and heart. They are richer far in my estimation than gold or diamonds. Were Edward to lose everything which to-day he is master of except his integrity, he would be none the less dear to me than I at this moment confess him to be."

"Dora Wilson, you are quite unsophisticated. Doubtless you are sincere, but I know that you are mistaken. Any beautiful woman will sacrifice much for position, for wealth."

"No virtuous woman will sell herself for gold."

"That is too broad a way of putting it. But, Dora, how little you know of the world. What is female loveliness without the adornments of wealth and fashion? Aye, worse than nothing. It is a diamond hidden in the mire; unable to glitter; incapable of winning admiration or appreciation."

The summer vacation had commenced. It was also the beginning of "the season" at Newport. Maude Dorrance had tried in vain to prevail on her father to consent to a Newport "season" for her. The next best thing was to obtain an invitation to visit Dora Wilson, whose mother had been Maude's mother's schoolmate. This was easily managed. Maude came to Mr. Wilson's with a mammoth trunk and a stylish outfit, which quite put Dora's neat attire to the blush. Maude's next ambition was to captivate Dora's lover. He was rich as well as handsome and talented. If she could win him her wildest dreams would be realized.

Dora Wilson's father was a man of fine mind and scholarly education, but of moderate means, owning a farm a few miles out of town, and selling its produce in the quaint but fashionable city. Edward Lacy's father had been Mr. Wilson's intimate friend from boyhood. Both parents had witnessed with satisfaction the attachment of the lovers. Mr. Wilson believed Edward Lacy in every way worthy of his daughter; otherwise he would have discountenanced her connection with him. He never once in thinking of a husband for his daughter, took wealth into consideration. And Mr. Lacy knew not among all the rich young ladies whom he had met, one who, in his estimation, equalled Dora Wilson for true nobility of character.

Maude Dorrance was the daughter of a Providence merchant, who had not prospered so much in his business as he might have done had his family been less extravagant. Maude's mother was a cold-hearted, ambitious, scheming woman. Maude, who was a fit daughter of such a mother, was eighteen, and just from a fashionable boarding school. She was very beautiful, and fully conscious of it. She had a showy surface education and an insinuating address.

When Edward Lacy came home from college, he immediately sought Dora. At her house he met the dashing Maude, who dazzled and bewildered him. Maude saw that she at least had dazzled him; she was fully determined to follow up the advantage she had gained.

Mrs. Wilson kept but one servant. Her handsome guest was very charming, but very exacting. Maude played the lady, left her bed for Dora to make, and her room for Dora to put in order, and flirted with Dora's lover, while poor Dora herself was burdened and confined by the additional household cares which she would not shift to the slender shoulders of her mother.

Often Edward would come in the morning to take Dora and her friend to ride. Dora, in her calico wrapper, would perhaps be making Maude's bed, or arranging her room, or perchance she would be getting up some extra dish for the table especially to please Maude's delicate palate. But Maude, radiant, handsome, heartless Maude, would appear in all the glory of a spotless morning negligé, ready for a ride which she professed to love above all other things, and "so sorry that poor, dear, delightful Dora" had to stay at home. Sorry! How glad she was in her secret heart, if heart she had. Maude never soiled her dainty fingers by lifting even the lightest of the burdens which her visit brought, not she.

So, wearily the summer vacation wore away. Still Maude prolonged her visit, while poor Dora, busy with domestic cares, saw little of Edward, and never without Maude, who always graciously insinuated herself into their presence.

One August morning Dora stood at a small table in one end of the dining-room cleaning the kerosene lamp chimneys. She had washed, wiped and polished them till they were so clear you could hardly see their crystal outlines. She had set the last one in place, and was taking a critical survey of her work when she suddenly heard at the dining-room door a rustle of silk, and the sound of footsteps. She turned. Maude and Edward were approaching her, Maude in advance with a smile of triumph on her face, Edward behind, with a confused, downcast look, and laggard pace.

"Dora, we are married. Wish us joy!" cried Maude.

It was a cruel blow. Dora sank into a chair, white and breathless. Edward thought she was fainting. He instinctively darted forward to help her. She had felt stunned. His movement roused her. She rose to her feet motioning him back. "Do not dare to touch me!" she exclaimed. Without another word she swept by the guilty couple, and hastened to her room. Instantaneously she gathered up the keepsakes Edward had given her, which, with the diamond ring, she made into a package and hastened with them to the parlor. "I will give them into his hand myself," she said. As she approached the open parlor door she heard Edward saying, "I dare not take you to my father's, we have been so hasty. He is wholly unprepared for this."

"My trunk must be removed from here at once," returned Maude. "We had better travel."

Dora glided into the room, white as a bloodless corpse. Without faltering she approached Edward, and handed him the package. "Take it. It contains all your gifts," said she.

Edward trembled violently as he took it from her hand. He could not look her in the face. Dora turned and almost literally flew to her room, fastening the door that no one might intrude upon her sorrow.

Seven years have passed, years of turmoil and change. Dora Wilson has outlived the cruel blow which almost struck her lifeless. Since she recovered from the illness caused by the one sharp sorrow of her girlhood, she has been no longer a child-like dreamer; she is a large-souled Christian woman, living in a world of reality, surrounded on every hand by sinful, suffering humanity, needing her aid.

And to-day, after years of heart loneliness, she is to be married to a man as noble in mind and heart as she once believed Edward Lacy to be. To-day, also, she is one of the most influential women of our time, lending the aid of her hand and pen to every just cause.

And what of Maude and Edward Lacy? Ah! retribution, inexorable retribution has visited them. Lacy's riches took wings and flew away. Lacy himself contracted the habit of drinking while in college; now he is a common drunkard. Maude, a faded, broken-down, disappointed, fretful woman, is living a life of suffering and wretchedness, which Dora in her hour of keenest suffering, never could have wished for her.

YOUNG GENTLEMEN OF THE PERIOD.

BY DAISY BURNS.

I met a young gentleman a few days ago on the street smoking a cigar; he was accompanied by young gentleman No. 2, chewing tobacco and spitting right and left. Now, Mr. Post, how old do you suppose these same young gentlemen were? One was eleven, the other thirteen, and they walked with as grand an air as if they were monarchs of all they surveyed. Chesterfield himself could not have put on a greater air than the younger gentleman, who was offering a cigar to his companion.

How I wished I was their mother for about an hour; I think I could have, at least, made them remember the days of their youth. The truth is, these Boys of the Period are just taking the day. It was but a short time ago I saw a little gentleman (there are no boys nowadays) of the mature age of ten, trying to learn his younger playmate to smoke a pipe, "just like pap."

The first thing we know the little chaps will be spending all their nickels and ten-cent pieces in purchasing somebody's magic compound that will force a beard to grow in two days on the smoothest face, so they can look like pap. Perhaps go to the bar and call for a glass of drink, just like pap. These little fellows have a great ambition to be like pap; and whatever pap does they are going to try to do. These paps of the present day do not seem to realize the necessity of their setting just such an example as they would wish their children to follow; but "paps," one and all, just as you are, so they will try to be, and more. Their habits are growing with their physical growth, and, no matter how pernicious, will become rooted long before they are men, and just from the idea of being like pap. If you don't want your boys to chew tobacco, smoke cigars, drink wine or play cards, never indulge before them.

Another case of young America—a boy of seventeen, remarked a short time ago to a young gentleman friend that a certain young lady was "dead in love with him," and when asked his reasons for supposing the young lady was in love with him, said, "Why she looked at me so hard when we dined at Mr. C.'s the other day." The first time this friend saw the young lady, he asked her why she had looked so hard at young C—— (that was young America,) at the aforesaid dining.

"Why," replied the lady, "the young animal actually passed his plate three times for mince-pie." No wonder she looked at him; so much for his vanity. They are not all alike, thank Heaven.

☞ To recklessly and ignorantly accuse another of mean or mercenary motives is apt to imply that you are conscious that, under the same circumstances, you might be governed by such low and selfish considerations.

Answers to Correspondents.

Pay Your Postage.—Authors and others often send us letters and manuscripts not fully paid. In these cases the Department here enforces payment of the deficiency—which we either have to pay, or to decline receiving the letters or manuscripts. Authors will also bear in mind that the Department now requires letter postage on all manuscripts—therefore it is often cheaper, as it is always safer, to send large packages by express.

We cannot undertake to answer questions relating to the acceptance or rejection of manuscripts in this column. And there is no occasion of writing to ask whether we will examine a manuscript. Send it on, and we will examine it; keeping a copy, to avoid all danger of loss—as we do not hold ourselves responsible for the safe return of manuscripts.

Inquirer, (Plainfield,) asks: "Under the law of Pennsylvania are ground-rents regarded as real or personal estate? Also as to mortgages?" Ground-rents are considered real estate; mortgages personal property.

Student, (Cumberland, Tenn.,) asks: "What is the meaning of the phrase 'Pragmatic sanction?'" It means a state ordinance decreed by a monarch or legislature. The phrase seems to have originated with the Byzantine monarchs, but was early introduced into France, and is now applied to general state decrees which have become historical. We have not room to enumerate these.

"Minnesota Gopher" writes: "Dear old Post: I would like to trouble you with a few questions, seeing that you are so patient with the inquisitive. 1st. How many inhabitants are there in the city of Philadelphia, and how many square miles are there within the city limits? 2d. How is gas procured, and how furnished to consumers? 3d. The never-failing question—what of my handwriting?" 1st. According to the last census about 700,000. The area of the city is 130 square miles. This of course includes the rural portion of the *county* of Philadelphia, now consolidated with the city. 2d. It is manufactured chiefly from bituminous coal, and furnished to the consumers at so much per foot. The measurement is made by an ingenious contrivance called the gasometer. Gas was made from wood at one time at the Market street bridge works in this city. In Germany wood gas has been employed to some extent in lighting towns. In Philadelphia works were put in operation in 1816 designed for making gas from water, or at least obtaining from it its hydrogen, and, while in the nascent state, combining it with carbon. The experiment proved a partial success. Gas is also produced for purposes of illumination from peat, rosin, and other substances, but coal is the main source of supply. We cannot in our limited space give an intelligible description of the process of manufacture. The subject is a very interesting one. The history of the experiments made with a view to introducing gas as an illuminating agent, the various failures and successes, the resistance to the innovation made by many, the description of the apparatus used in making, measuring and distributing the article, etc., would form a volume. 3d. It is infinitely better than your spelling, as we think you ought to know yourself. "Goler" for gopher; "inhabitence" for inhabitants; "gass" for gas; "carictors" for characters; and "faleing" for failing, look bad for any reader of The Post. We trust your next letter will show an improvement; if not, we will *go for* you again.

W. G. T., (Albany, N. Y.,) is another correspondent who favors us with information respecting the authorship of the lines inquired after by "E. W.," Nov. 22d, now known to be by Montgomery. We hereby acknowledge his kindness.

Constant Reader, (Dalton, Ga.,) writes: "I observe a notice of a new book for children, entitled 'Bed-time Stories,' by Louise Chandler Moulton, and having three of the little 'God-given comforts,' I naturally feel interested in juvenile literature. Will you inform me what a copy of the above-named work will cost?" $1.50. Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, Philada., will send it.

"Stellus," (Red Rock, Iowa,) asks: "1st. Why does Easter Sunday always come in the spring of the year? and why do people eat eggs on that day more than others? 2d. What is the origin of dog-days? or how did certain days of summer receive that name? 3d. What are light and heat? Are they the same? And what are actinic rays of light? 4th. What do you think of my writing, spelling and grammar?" 1st. Easter is the festival of the resurrection of Christ, or the Christian passover. It comes in the spring because the event it celebrates occurred at that season. It is called a movable feast because of a rule which makes Easter Sunday to be always the first Sunday after the full moon which happens upon or next after March 21. It may fall as early as the 22d of March, or as late as the 25th of April. Eating eggs on Easter is an old custom, the origin of which is obscure. 2d. The Romans called the six or eight hottest weeks of summer, dog-days. According to their theory the dog-star or Sirius, rising with the sun, added to its heat, and the dog-days bore the combined heat of the dog-star and the sun. 3d. Of the real nature of light we know nothing. There are various theories which have been proposed to account for its phenomena, but we cannot give them here. Heat is a physical agent, known only by its effects upon matter. Its nature or cause are not clearly understood. The relation between heat and light is a very intimate one, but they are not the same. Actinic rays of light constitute the third or chemical principle, heat and the luminous principle being the other two. The constitution of the solar ray may be compared to a bundle of three sticks: one of which represents light, another heat, and a third the actinic principle. 4th. Your handwriting might easily be made a good hand; your grammar is not good, nor your spelling.

J. M. R. A., (Philadelphia.) We have received your communication, but we cannot pretend to advise you in so delicate and personal a matter, except to say to you, do not go to the extreme you suggest, while any hope of a change of feeling remains. Valid objections to your desires may exist.

Miswis, (Monroe, Benton Co., Oregon,) asks: "1st. What is the proper manner of introducing two or more ladies of the same name to one person? 2d. What will remove freckles, without injuring the skin? And also fa—— injurious to the skin? 3d. Do you know of any cosmetic that does not hurt the skin?" 1st. If the ladies are married, give their full name and the title of Mrs., as Mrs. Mary Harris, Mrs. Anna Harris. If unmarried, give only the family name of the eldest (if sisters) with the title of Miss; and the full name, with title, of the other or others. If the ladies are not sisters, give their names as in the case of married ladies, with the appropriate title. 2d. We gave a recipe in a recent number (No. 19.) We would not recommend the use of the article you mention. 3d. We can name several very safe ones—plain, nutritious food; bathing in pure soft water; exercise, etc. Perfumed milk baths for the complexion are advertised in New York.

"Loquacious" writes in reference to a recent subject, that of "horse-hair snakes," as follows: "Thank you for your courteous reply (Oct. 18th) to my questions. You advanced many ideas altogether out of my power to answer, not being a scientist, nor even a highly educated person, as you can see. Perhaps you will feel as if you were wasting time with a 'lowman not worthy of your steel,' but I would like to pursue the subject a little farther in the hope of bringing out others on it. I have not repeated the experiment, choosing to leave that to some one else; but I was not a little boy when I experimented with horse-hairs in the manner referred to, and I want to tell you about the phenomenon as I have observed it many times. First, the hair alters in shape to a perfect resemblance of a snake. Second, they always move through the water (what appears to be) the head foremost, with a wavy snake-like motion. Thirdly, on lifting them out of the water they will twist and wriggle with every appearance of a well-trained snake, and always start off in the same way when again immersed; if it was moved by 'minute creatures' they must agree better than folks in general. 3d. What is Joaquin Miller's true name? In speaking of him in company several insisted that was his true name. I had forgotten what it was and appeal to you to settle the matter, as all the disputants are readers of The Post." 1st. We permit our correspondent, whom we do not regard as unworthy of our steel (pen), to say his say, yet are not convinced that what he advances is true. If others can unite with him in his testimony, or sustain us in our position, we shall be glad to hear from them. There is a little animal, we believe, that resembles a horse-hair and is found in the water. 2d. The real name of the poet known as Joaquin Miller is said by some to be Charles H. Miller. Personally we know nothing about it.

Nemo, (Peru, Ind.,) asks us to give some reliable rule for measuring ear-corn in the crib; i. e. to find the exact number of bushels. We know of none; in fact do not believe there is any that would give correct results, as the same bulk of unshelled grain often yields more or less in bushels, according to degree of dryness, variety, etc.

Shoemaker asks: "1st. Who or what were Scylla and Charybdis? I see it often stated that 'to avoid the errors of one, we are in danger of falling into the follies of the other.' 2d. Are —— a reliable firm? 3d. How is my handwriting? What are its defects, merits, etc.?" 1st. In Grecian mythology there were two voracious monsters which dwelt opposite to each other, the former on the Italian, and the latter on the Sicilian coast. Charybdis, thrice every day, gulped down the waters of the adjacent sea, and thrice cast them up again. Scylla was even more terrible in his wrathful demonstrations, seizing vessels and devouring their crews. In geography, Charybdis was a whirlpool on the coast of Sicily, and Scylla a rock on the coast of Italy, whose proximity rendered the navigation of the Messenian strait peculiarly perilous to the sailors of antiquity, since in making the passage, while they endeavored to avoid one they were in danger of running upon the other. Hence the figurative saying you refer to. Horace employed it in the first place in speaking of authors. He says in "trying to avoid Scylla one may drift into Charybdis;" i. e., in seeking to avoid one fault, may fall into another. 2d. We know nothing of the parties. 3d. Your handwriting is good, its prominent merits being neatness and legibility; its only marked defect a certain stiffness, which practice will probably overcome.

[Several letters are held over to be answered in our next.]